■ Lifestyle / C1
Editor's rave board: La prima Donna (Karan)

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Sri Lankan officials' new problem: Sexual abuse of victims

■ Business / B1
2004 investment registration hits above P180B, up by 220%

■ News / A2
Baguio health officials instruct service -related employees to wear masks

■ Metro / A17
Kaye Torres: On her 69th birthday, new witness is Nida's 'beautiful gift'

Conspiracy theorists pin tsunami on aliens, military

PWEDENG PARAMDAM NG PANGINOON SA KASALANAN NG MUNDO

HONG KONG—Just 11 days after Asia's tsunami catastrophe, conspiracy theorists are out in force, accusing governments of a cover-up, blaming the military for testing top secret eco-weapons or

CONSPIRACY/ A16

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Oil firms cut gasoline prices by ₱1 per liter

By Abigail L. Ho

OIL FIRMS in the country cut gasoline prices by P1 a liter yesterday following a considerable decline in world oil prices.

It was the first price cut this year and the second in as many weeks. Oil companies slashed prices of gasoline by 30 centavos a

OIL/ A8

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Friday, January 7, 2005 ★★ 48 pages / 5 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 30 P18
website: www.inq7.net

MOURNING the tsunami victims, Pope John Paul II observes 3 minutes of silence during his weekly general audience on Wednesday on the mammoth stage of the Audience Hall at the Vatican. The figure of Christ rises from out of a mass of twisted pieces of metal that resembles a giant broken coral created by Pericle Fazzini. Against this backdrop of modern art, the Pope delivers his weekly message. REUTERS

Race to save 5M people

World leaders ask UN to lead, coordinate relief operation

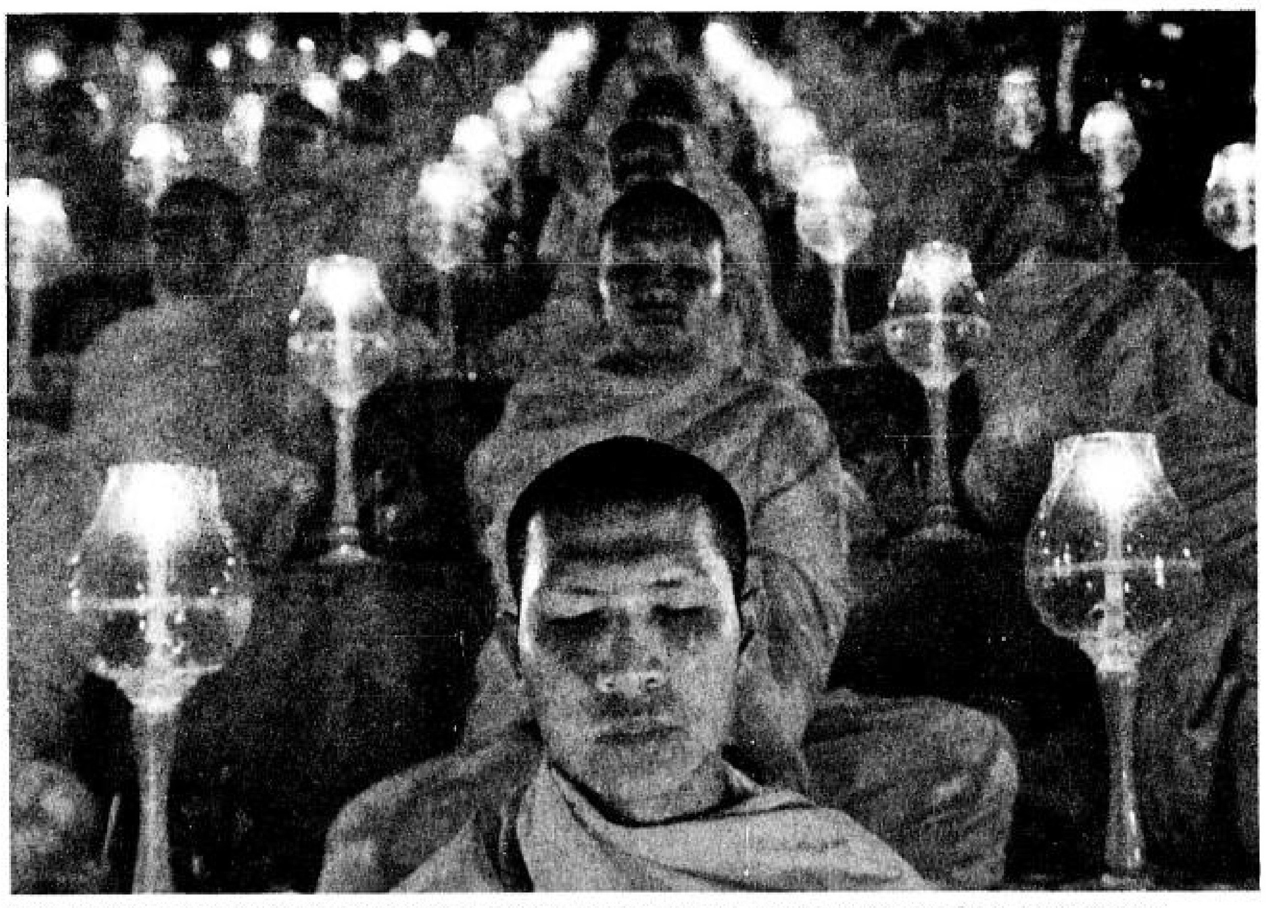
JAKARTA—UN Secretary General Kofi Annan yesterday urged nations to immediately come forward with the billions of dollars in aid they had promised to tsunami-shattered regions amid warnings that the death toll may double to 300,000 because of outbreaks caused by unsanitary conditions in crowded relief camps.

In response, world leaders pledged to work together to help devastated regions recover from the worst natural disaster in living memory, but warned it was a race against time to get aid to 5 million severely affected people before they succumb to disease.

World leaders gathered for a day in Indonesia, which was the hardest hit by the Dec. 26 disaster, to figure out the best way to speed aid to victims.

While nearly $4 billion had been pledged worldwide, the United Nations has warned that—as in previous disasters—some of the

RACE/ A16



CHANTING prayers for the dead, Christians, Muslims and over a thousand Buddhist monks gather in Phuket, Thailand, for memorial rites for the tsunami victims, the first one organized by Thai officials. AP

'How could God let this happen?'

AS THE world tries to make sense of Asia's tsunami disaster and its massive toll on humanity, clerics of all religions are grappling with an age-old theological question which challenges even the most faithful believers: How could God let this happen?

The earthquake and tsunami showed no favor, wiping out Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim villages in Sri Lanka, inflicting enormous casualties in mostly Islamic Indonesia, and devastating parts of strongly Buddhist Thailand, where Christian and Jewish tourists also perished.

"It was as if God had unleashed his anger on the people," Muslim victim Haji Ali said the day after tsunamis destroyed his hometown Bireuen in Indonesia's Aceh province, the area

HOW COULD/ A7

Gov't to sell bonds to OFWs in US to raise P5.6B

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE OFFICE of External Affairs (OEA), an agency created by Malacañang just three months ago, plans to raise more than $100 million (at least P5.6 billion) by selling "Makabayan Investment Certificates" to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the United States, Canada and Europe.

Proceeds will be used to finance micro enterprises such as piggeries or *sari-sari* stores.

But based on the concept paper drawn up by the OEA, the Makabayan ICs appeared to be a hastily crafted investment program with no clear payback for investors and safeguards on how the money would be spent.

GOV'T/ A7

Gonzalez told to stop talking about Jalosjos

By Christian V. Esguerra and Philip C. Tubeza

JUSTICE Secretary Raul Gonzalez should shut up on the issue of a possible pardon for convicted child rapist Romeo Jalosjos, the Council on Philippine Affairs said yesterday.

But a bristling Gonzalez said he was merely answering questions from the media when he said there was a possibility that the former

GONZALEZ / A6

TALES OF THE CITI

'Trust fund should live up to its name'

By Doris C. Dumlao
Business

(Last of four parts)

TO MANY Filipinos, a bank is a place in which to keep their excess money.

But when offered higher-yielding investment instruments such as "trust" funds, some do not understand that these carry higher risks than regular deposits. They may not know that while savings and current accounts and time deposits are covered by the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp., trust funds are not.

SPECIAL REPORT
Project Editor: Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

Over the past few years, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has been swamped with complaints about the nature of the trust products

TRUST/ A8

ROGER MARGALLO

THE REMAINS of Catherine Lomadilla, a Filipino dancer in Kao Lak, Thailand, are turned over by her fiance, Jay Decayco, to her sister Catherine.

EMERGENCY summit to discuss the crisis that's gripping the world gets under way in Jakarta on Thursday attended by donors and world leaders, including President Arroyo (center). AP

2 solons defend Mike but Rosebud refuses to shut up

By Cynthia D. Balana and Fe Zamora

IN AN apparent attempt at damage control, two lawmakers from the ruling Lakas party yesterday chided ex-police agent Mary "Rosebud" Ong for going public about her unpaid "agent's fees."

Antique Rep. Exequiel Javier and Bacolod City Rep. Monico Puentevella said in separate statements that Ong should just contact the officials with whom she had negotiated the

2 SOLONS/ A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Easten sections of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: CHONA GALANG, PDI RESEARCH/01/07/05

Second FRONT PAGE

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Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains.
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

OFWs sent $8.3B home, says DOLE

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE LABOR department yesterday said remittances from overseas Filipino workers last year could reach $8.3 billion despite a very minimal growth in OFW deployment.

Citing the consistent increase in remittances in the last three quarters of 2004, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said the figure for the entire year may yet breach the $8-billion mark.

Data from the DOLE showed that annual OFW remittances have grown consistently, registering $6.031 billion in 2001, $7.189 billion in 2002 and $7.639 billion in 2003.

Sto. Tomas said the remittances increased by 9.5 percent to $6.937 billion as of October last year, compared with the $6.336 billion recorded during the same period last year.

"If the trend was maintained for the months of November and December, OFW remittances for the entire year would exceed $8.3 billion," Sto. Tomas said in a statement.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas attributed the increase to the deployment of highly skilled and higher paid OFWs like health workers; the much strengthened presence of local banks abroad, especially in countries with large OFW populations; and seasonal inflows, particularly during the Christmas holidays when fund transfers peak.

The BSP said the United States, United Kingdom, Japan, Saudi Arabia and Italy remained major sources of OFW remittances.

Violence returns to Luisita

TARLAC CITY—Tension returned to troubled Hacienda Luisita as armed men on Wednesday night shot at a group of striking workers, wounding two of them.

Ernesto Ramos and George Lablan survived the attack that happened at 11 p.m. at the west gate of the sprawling plantation owned by the Cojuangco family in Barangay San Miguel of this city as the strike entered its 60th day.

Lablan is a member of the United Luisita Workers Union while Ramos belongs to the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union.

Both unions started their strike on Nov. 6 last year to demand a stop to the implementation of what they called an onerous stock distribution option scheme and to press for wage increases. The strike resulted in the bloody dispersal of striking workers 10 days later, resulting in the killing of seven workers.

Last Dec. 8, Marcelino Beltran, chair of the Alyansa ng Magbubukid ng Tarlac and vice president of Anakpawis-Tarlac, was also gunned down.

At the Ramos General Hospital where he was being treated, Lablan told the INQUIRER that two men came out of nowhere and shot at them while they were manning the picket line at the plantation's gate.

Lablan said policemen in civilian clothes stationed at the area tried to stop the two men but failed. "The police were pleading to the men but the latter started shooting," he said.

He said the strikers fled as the shooting started but he and Ramos were hit. He said the four shots that were fired were aimed at them.

The gunmen, he said, then fled in a brown Nissan Patrol toward the national highway.

Lablan said he was part of a roving team assigned Wednesday night to monitor if scabs were smuggled into the sugar central.

But according to Chief Supt. Rowland Albano, Central Luzon police director, the violence started after the suspects' gray vehicle hit the picket line as it was going out of the hacienda gate.

He said a heated argument ensued between the strikers and the wagon's occupants, prompting four men to alight and fire at the strikers.

Entry point

The west gate is a major entry point to the Las Haciendas, an exclusive residential community, and to the Luisita Golf and Country Club. But it also leads to the sugar mill, so the strikers put up a picket line in front of the gate.

Albano said investigators recovered four empty shells of a 45-caliber pistol and a live ammunition for a caliber-5.56 rifle from the crime scene.

Albano refused to say if the gunmen were security officers of Hacienda Luisita.

"We still cannot make any conclusion," Albano said in a phone interview. "We have to finish questioning both duty officers and protesters."

Police later found out that the Patrol was registered to a certain Bonifacio de Jesus, a resident of Barangay Gonsuran in Pandi, Bulacan. Its license plate number, CLA 119, belonged to an Isuzu jeepney, according to Albano.

Wednesday's violence erupted even as the Philippine National Police has yet to complete its investigation of the November shooting.

The PNP Task Force Luisita headed by Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco has yet to disclose who shot based on paraffin and ballistic tests conducted by the PNP crime laboratory.

Hacienda Luisita strikers yesterday accused Tarlac Rep. Benigno Aquino III (LP, Tarlac) of harassing hacienda workers on the night of Jan. 2 when he brought soldiers and policemen to the picket line as he "talked" with them.

Tried to negotiate

Marilou Ricardo, an official of the Alyansa ng Manggagawang Bukid ng Asyenda Luisita, said Aquino tried to "negotiate" with striking workers on the night of Jan. 2 but ended up threatening them with more lay-offs.

Ricardo claimed Aquino was apparently under the influence of alcohol when he met with the workers. "His answers to our questions seemed illogical. He seemed to veer away from the issues we were presenting to him," he said. *Jo Martinez-Clemente and Russell Arador, PDI Central Luzon Desk, Christian Esguerra, Cynthia Balana, Norman Bordadora and Carlito Pablo*

DOLE ruling on strike due next week

THE DEPARTMENT of Labor and Employment is expected to issue a decision on the controversial dispute involving the Central Azucarera de Tarlac in the next few weeks.

Labor Undersecretary Manuel Imson said yesterday in a phone interview that the shooting incident involving the president of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union (Catlu) would not affect the conciliation initiated by the DOLE.

"That is basically a police issue, and it will not have any effect on our desire to finish the case," he said, adding that the DOLE was in the "final stages" of the decision-making process and saw no need for more meetings with the contending parties.

The collective bargaining agreement between the Catlu and management bogged down late last year, with the latter refusing the workers' demands of a P50 daily wage increase, a P30,000 signing bonus and a retirement package pegged at double the monthly wage. *Blanche Rivera*

$20,000 BOUNTY

Abu Sayyaf leader falls

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A member of the Abu Sayyaf kidnap gang with a $20,000 reward on his head by the US government was recaptured yesterday by the military, according to authorities.

Toting Hanno, alias Jacaria, was arrested during a raid by military intelligence agents in Barangay Landang Gua on the island of Sacol off the Zamboanga peninsula, said Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza said.

His arrest came just hours before US Embassy deputy chief of mission Joseph Mussomeli arrived in Zamboanga to inspect projects funded by the US Agency for International Development, Braganza said.

The military said Hanno was part of an Abu Sayyaf unit that raided Dr. Jose Torres Memorial Hospital in the town of Lamitan on Basilan island on June 2, 2001, during which dozens of locals were kidnapped and some were later beheaded.

The same unit also seized hostages, including American missionaries Martin and Gracia Burnham and Guillermo Sobero, in the Dos Palmas Resort in Palawan on May 27, 2001. Sobero and Martin were later killed while Gracia had returned to Kansas in Missouri.

"Hanno is in the US Reward List with a $20,000 bounty," he added.

Hanno has been brought to Edwin Andrews Airbase for interrogation, Braganza said.

Ricardo Cabaron, Western Mindanao deputy prosecutor, told the INQUIRER that Hanno was one of those who escaped from the Basilan provincial jail last year. Other Abu Sayyaf members still being hunted down by authorities are Abu Black, Jaid Awalal and Anik Abbas.

Hanno, who is facing three death sentences, will be brought to the National Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa after his interrogation, Cabaron said.

The Abu Sayyaf is a small group of Islamic militants blamed for a series of kidnappings and bombings in the Philippines in recent years. They have kidnapped and ransomed off dozens of foreign hostages since 2000.

They also claimed responsibility for the February bombing of a ferry that killed over 100 passengers in Manila Bay.

The group has been linked by both Washington and Manila to the al-Qaida terror network of Osama bin Laden. *Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau, Alcuin Papa, AFP*

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2 Abu bandits slain in Kudarat

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Two Abu Sayyaf bandits were killed during a clash with soldiers in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat at about 4 p.m. last Thursday, the military said yesterday.

Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza said soldiers from the 601st Infantry Brigade were conducting an operation when they clashed with about 40 bandits, reportedly led by Isnilon Hapilon, in Barangay Lumitan.

Braganza said soldiers were still pursuing the group as of press time last night.

Palimbang Mayor Labualas Mamansual said residents have long wanted the military to go after the Abu Sayyaf and its local ally, the Abu Sufia, and drive them out of their areas.

Mamansual said residents were angered after the bandit group shot to death on Dec. 31 a 68-year-old *imam*, identified as Panambulan Delema.

"The bandits are seemingly going berserk. They will kill anybody whom they suspect of being supportive of the government," he said.

The depredations of the two armed groups have triggered a mass evacuation from at least eight villages of Palimbang, authorities said.

The Municipal Welfare and Development Office (MWDO) has reported that 1,300 families have fled their homes for fear of the bandits.

"The people were already fed up. They want the military to run after the Abu Sayyaf and Abu Sufia gangs," Mamansual said.

The military has been hunting down Hapilon's group and that of Abu Sayyaf chief Khadaffy Janjalani in the hinterlands of Sultan Kudarat following reports of their presence in the area.

Braganza said the two Abu Sayyaf leaders were driven to seek refuge in the province because of the intense military operation against them in Western Mindanao.

A few weeks ago, the military bombed a village in Datu Piang, Maguindanao, where a meeting between Janjalani and suspected members of the Jemaah Islamiyah regional terror group was said to be taking place.

Janjalani was reportedly killed in the raid but the military later said the reports may have been intended to mislead the military. *Julie Alipala and Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Gov't should have paid Piatco $400M first, says lawyer

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE GOVERNMENT should have paid Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) $400 million after it expropriated Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport last month, a lawyer for the disputed terminal's displaced employees and contractors said yesterday.

H. Harry Roque, the employees' and contractors' counsel, said that under Republic Act No. 8974—the law governing the expropriation of private property for government infrastructure projects—the government should have deposited in Piatco's favor an amount "equivalent to 100 percent" of the terminal's value based on the Bureau of Internal Revenue's zonal valuation and "the value of the improvements and structures" in the disputed facility.

"Government is sending the wrong signal when it seizes private property in sheer disregard of legal procedures," Roque said. "The takeover of Terminal 3 is unconstitutional because it was done without due process of law and just compensation."

The Pasay City Regional Trial Court on Tuesday ordered the government to make an initial payment of $62.34 million to Piatco after it issued a writ of possession allowing the government to take over the terminal.

Roque said his clients would ask the court today to cancel the writ of possession unless the government paid Piatco $400 million. He said the figure was reasonable since Gloria Tan Climaco, presidential adviser for strategic projects, had agreed to it in 2002 as the value of the terminal.

Roque said Piatco should be paid so that it in turn could pay his clients. He said the government disregarded legal procedures when it deposited P3 billion ($53.61 million) as initial payment to Piatco in the Land Bank of the Philippines.

"The government did not make a proper deposit. The law says the deposit should be made for the account of the property owner. What the government did [was] only to present a certification that such and such amount [had] been set apart for just compensation," he said.

The Pasay court based its order on RA 8974 but Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo said the law did not apply in this case.

Benipayo said the law referred only to the acquisition of real property "needed as right-of-way, site or location for any national government infrastructure project."

Not a right-of-way

"Obviously, [the terminal] is not a right-of-way, site or location for any national government infrastructure project but the infrastructure itself," Benipayo said.

Roque, however, contested Benipayo's assertion, saying the government had used the same law in expropriation cases involving the Light Rail Transport (LRT) system.

A German diplomat, meanwhile, said yesterday investments of his country in the Philippines were likely to be affected following Malacañang's decision to take over Naia Terminal 3.

The diplomat, who asked not to be named, told reporters that German investments in the country were "somehow being limited" after other countries "proved to be more interesting and open."

"We have seen that other Asian countries are [more] forthcoming with projects, especially with infrastructure. They are more daring and promising and the Philippines is definitely not one of them. We have been encountering delays and problems, legal issues," he said.

German firms would prefer other countries like China, India, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia, where the governments were more responsive, he added.

A German firm, Fraport AG, is currently embroiled in the expropriation battle involving Naia 3. The company was part of Piatco, the consortium that built the new airport terminal.

But the diplomat clarified that his country had made no assessment yet of investment prospects in the Philippines. He said what he was referring to was only his embassy's evaluation. *With Jerome Aning*

New car buyers to pay 3-year fees

NEW CAR buyers will not only have to contend with higher automobile prices, they will also have to pay three years' worth of registration at once for their new vehicles.

The Land Transportation Office adopted the new registration scheme in order to collect up front the P1.2 billion it had projected to earn from new car registrations over the next three years.

The registration will be valid for three years, however.

New vehicles covered by the plan would be limited to those purchased from LTO-accredited manufacturers like the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc., the Truck Manufacturers Association and the Motorcycle Development Program Participants Association.

Aside from third-party liability insurance, the scheme requires new car buyers to secure a Department of Environment and Natural Resources certificate of conformity before their vehicles could be registered.

Lovely Quipot, LTO public information officer, said vehicles assembled and sold by non-LTO-accredited firms would still be registered under the old yearly schedule.

Apart from the added expense, Quipot said the new scheme "will give some peace [of mind] and comfort to car owners because they do not have to go back to us yearly until [after] that third year."

She clarified that there would be no increase in registration fees, except that new car owners would have to pay three years' worth at once.

Under the scheme, new light vehicles would cost P4,800 to register; medium-type vehicles, P10,800; heavy vehicles, P24,000, and motorcycles, P720.

She said there would be no increase in driver's license application fees. *Nelson F. Flores*

Lawyers, docs retain VAT exemptions

By Carlito Pablo

LAWYERS, doctors and other sectors exempt from the Value-Added Tax can breathe easy for some time more.

The House committee on ways and means yesterday decided to prioritize the increase of VAT rates from the current 10 percent level to 12 percent but set aside proposals to lift exemptions.

Committee vice chair Rep. Eric Singson (LP, Ilocos Sur) said the panel would need more time to consult with VAT-exempt sectors before making a decision on which exemptions should be lifted.

The lifting of VAT exemptions, which also cover, among others, the sale of petroleum products and transactions of cooperatives, could net the government some P10 billion.

"But we still have to settle many things with these sectors before a decision is made on the lifting of VAT exemptions," Singson said. "We will take action on these at the appropriate time."

Increasing the VAT rates to 12 percent, Singson explained, would bring in P25 billion in fresh revenues.

Singson is the principal author of the VAT rate increase measure embodied in House Bill No. 1468.

The bill has been endorsed by Malacañang as an alternative to a proposal to tax the windfall profits of the telecommunications companies. The proposal, however, was shelved.

In HB 1468, Singson acknowledged that the upward adjustment in VAT rates is actually an increase in consumption tax which all consumers must shoulder.

"But if these sacrifices will yield fiscal stability in the long run, the Filipino public is duty-bound to endure this burden for the time being," Singson said. "[W]e must bite the bullet to bring us out of the fiscal rut," Singson added.

Singson said the VAT had been accounting for 20 percent of the national government's yearly revenue take since its implementation in 1998.

"An upward adjustment therefore in the VAT rate is expected to bring in sizable revenues that will supplement the financial needs of the government," Singson said.

Documents in Tan tax case missing, claims Gonzalez

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE ORIGINAL documents representing the government's evidence in the P25 billion tax evasion case against taipan Lucio Tan and other officers of Fortune Tobacco are missing, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday.

Gonzalez made this claim on the eve of the respondents' scheduled arraignment today before the Marikina Metropolitan Trial Court.

Gonzalez said he had asked Bureau of Internal Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno to find out how the "original" documents disappeared.

"He should investigate this," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez said some of the missing documents included the original income tax returns and records of value added tax returns of Fortune Tobacco Corp., Tan's flagship company.

"We have machine copies of these documents but I think these would not stand in court. At best these would be just secondary evidence," he said.

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6 slain in Cotabato robbery; Cafgu man hunted

By Edwin O. Fernandez and Charlie C. Señase
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ALAMADA, North Cotabato—At least six people belonging to two farming families were killed in an ambush here on Wednesday night.

Gov. Emmanuel Piñol identified one of the three suspects in the ambush as Efren Pagutalan, a member of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) assigned to Alamada.

"He was positively identified by the survivors," Piñol told the INQUIRER by phone.

"A team of soldiers is now tracking down Pagutalan and his comrades. We hope to get them anytime today," Piñol said.

Killed were Marcelo Erocedo, 60; his wife Juliana, 55; Gernani Quimot; her 6-year-old son Jessel, and a relative, Carlos Aldamar. The sixth fatality, Freddie Quimot, 30, died at a clinic in nearby Midsayap town.

Alamada Mayor Ernesto Concepcion said the 6-year-old boy was shot in the head at close range. He identified the survivors as Susana Liboon and Melissa Butalid.

Concepcion said the victims were robbed of their cash and valuables. Wire reports quoted officials as saying the stolen amount ranged from P60,000 to P100,000.

Concepcion said the victims had just sold a truckload of corn and other crops to Midsayap traders on Wednesday and were hiking back home from Crossing Kisolaw to Barangay Guiling when the three men fired at them.

Liboon and Butalid were able to escape the ambush and hide in the bushes under cover of darkness as it was about 10 p.m., the mayor said.

"It appears the suspects waited for the victims to return home," he said.

Gunman recognized

Butalid and Liboon said they recognized one of the gunmen as a government militiaman who had a fight with one of the victims, according to Concepcion. Piñol said the motive may have been robbery or a conflict over land.

The two survivors said they were walking a few meters behind their companions so they saw the others fall one by one during the first volley of fire.

"We hid in the bushes, the suspects tried to find us, good thing they failed," Concepcion quoted Liboon as saying.

Maj. Gen. Raul Relano, 6th Infantry Division chief, said joint police and military investigators were able to recover slugs from M14 and M16 automatic rifles at the scene of the crime.

Relano said pursuit operations against the suspects were ongoing.

Alamada is a largely agricultural town with a population of about 40,000. Muslim and communist guerrillas also operate in the area.

The two survivors have been placed under police protection. *With reports from Alcuin Papa; AP; AFP*

Kidnapped Malaysians, Indon dead, KL confirms

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia—Two Malaysians and an Indonesian abducted by Muslim extremists last April have died in the southern Philippines, the Malaysian military said Thursday.

The three crew members of a Malaysian tugboat were kidnapped in an April 11, 2004, raid in waters off Malaysia's Sabah state—an incident that the Philippine military has blamed on the al-Qaida-linked Muslim extremist group Abu Sayyaf.

Gen. Mohamed Shahrin Abdul Majib, commander of Malaysia's Fifth Brigade, said the three were either killed or died of illness over the past two or three weeks.

"These are from reliable sources," Mohamed Shahrin was quoted as saying by the national news agency, Bernama. "These three have been confirmed dead by December."

He did not elaborate, but said Malaysia was seeking the help of the Philippine armed forces to search for the bodies of the men, identified as Malaysians Toh Chiu Thong, 48, and Wong Siu Ung, 52, as well as Indonesian Walter Sampel, 53.

Philippine authorities in November recovered skeletal remains feared to be those of the men, but forensic examinations showed they were not, Mohamed Shahrin added.

Sea kidnappings are common in areas near the southern Philippines. The Abu Sayyaf launched boat raids on resorts in Malaysia twice in 2000, kidnapping tourists and demanding ransoms. *AP*

Special session: Ball's in Senate's court

By Carlito Pablo

IF NO new revenue measure is passed until today, the last day of the special session of Congress, blame it on the senators.

This Senate-bashing sentiment is sweeping across the House of Representatives as it has been compelled to take up measures outside the ambit of President Macapagal-Arroyo's proclamation calling for a special session.

House Majority Leader Rep. Prospero Nograles (Lakas, Davao City) said the chamber was hoping that the Senate would be able to finish deliberations on the lateral attrition bill by late yesterday afternoon so bicameral conference committee meetings can start.

"In the meantime, we are forced to take up other measures like the extension of the franchise of Pagcor (Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.), the extension of the rent control law and the compensation bill for Marcos human rights victims," Nograles said.

"If you were to read the President's proclamation, it is more directed to the Senate since the House has already done its part in revenue legislation," Nograles said.

The Senate was expected last night to approve on second and third reading the lateral attrition bill that seeks to improve tax collection in the country by providing a system of reward and penalties to tax collectors.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said senators even held a caucus Wednesday night to iron out contentious issues thus, expediting the process. If the bill is approved, there is a chance for the bicameral conference committee to convene today, according to Drilon.

Besides the lateral attrition bill, the proposed tax amnesty measure is also pending before the Senate.

Before the end of the year, the House approved these two bills on third and final readings.

Rep. Eric Singson (LP, Ilocos Sur) said: "We have no choice but to wait for Senate action. The ball is with the Senate really."

"While the Senate is still deliberating, we at the House can continue working on other measures on the committee level," added Singson, vice chair of the House committee on ways and means.

Rep. Constantino Jaraula (Lakas, Cagayan de Oro City) said the current bottleneck of revenue legislation was largely the Senate's problem.

Jaraula even recalled that from July to December, the House had forwarded at least 1,000 bills to the Senate and not one had been acted upon.

Members of the minority bloc aren't letting the administration bloc get away with deliberations on measures not covered by President Arroyo's proclamation for a special session on tax bills.

House Minority Leader Rep. Francis Escudero (NPC, Sorsogon) said, "A special session is called for a particular purpose and they can't get outside such parameter."

"It only shows that we are only trying to fill in time," Escudero said.

Opposition Rep. Jacinto Paras (LDP, Negros Oriental) said it would be "illegal" to steer floor deliberations outside the intended purpose of the special session.

"It proves our point that a special session is not needed," Paras said. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

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'I CAN'T AFFORD IT'

Erap hobbled by HK costs

By Armand N. Nocum

OUSTED President Estrada's mounting medical bills and living expenses in Hong Kong are more than enough reason for him to want to return home.

Even if his doctors have recommended that he stay in Hong Kong for another month, Estrada said he had made up his mind to leave on Jan. 21, six days beyond the Jan. 15 deadline set by the Sandiganbayan for him to return.

In a phone call from the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital, Estrada said he would prefer to come home soon to avoid entailing any more expenses.

"I cannot afford it anymore," said the ousted leader who is on trial for allegedly plundering more than P4 billion during his short-lived presidency.

In Manila, government prosecutors yesterday opposed a request by Estrada to stay until Jan. 21 in Hong Kong to give him more time to recuperate.

Estrada can recuperate for as long as he likes but only as long as it is in a government-controlled hospital in Manila and not in Hong Kong or his mansion in suburban San Juan, prosecutors said.

"We want his knee operation to be successful. We understand his situation," chief prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said, but added Estrada would be better off at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center run by the military.

Petition for extension

The Sandiganbayan, which had ordered Estrada to return no later than Jan. 15, will take up Estrada's petition for an extension.

His US-based doctor, Christopher Mow, in a letter to the court on Wednesday said Estrada should be allowed to stay close to a major medical center for six to eight weeks to prevent complications.

Mow said Estrada should also be allowed to stay at his home in San Juan, which is close to the Cardinal Santos hospital, an upscale facility.

Ignacio said, however, that Estrada should definitely not be allowed to stay home once he returns.

Now on his 11th day in the Hong Kong hospital, Estrada figured that he could be spending more than the P6.3 million that the hospital's marketing director Jeremy Low earlier said he would incur for his knee replacement operation and the estimated 18 days' hospital stay.

The amount does not include the "professional specialists' fees" of Estrada's two orthopedic surgeons, Mow and Julian Chang.

Estrada said his bills could shoot up way past Low's estimates.

He claims to have two bone surgeons, a cardiologist, an anesthesiologist, a lung specialist and a kidney specialist attending to him.

According to Low's computation, a big chunk of Estrada's bills includes the four hospital rooms he had rented, each of which costs about P22,176 a day.

Estrada has also rented a high-priced apartment for his wife Sen. Loi Ejercito, his children and his grandchildren, most of whom are in Hong Kong to keep him company and to boost his morale.

Cost of staff

Estrada has also complained about the cost of keeping his staff and the two Presidential Security Group and four policemen that the court had assigned to guard him.

The ousted president also clarified that he would be gaining only less than an inch over his present 5'8 1/2" height.

"Dr. Mow was only saying I would gain two inches because the erosion of my bones had made me bow-legged, thus lessening my height by more than an inch. So it would seem that I will gain two inches over my height before the operation, but it will only be more than half an inch over my real height," he said.

Meanwhile, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, a co-accused in his father's plunder case, has asked the Sandiganbayan that he be allowed to return to Hong Kong following his return here on Jan. 9.

Defense lawyer Jose' B. Flaminiano said the young Estrada has plans to return to Hong Kong on Jan. 12 and remain there until Jan. 16 to keep his father company.

Pinoys in UAE warned against sending obscene cell phone material

By Jerome Aning

THE DEPARTMENT of Foreign Affairs yesterday warned Filipinos working in the United Arab Emirates against sending obscene material through their mobile phones. This, the DFA said, was illegal and could lead to imprisonment.

"Some (overseas Filipino workers) are not aware that distribution of obscene materials is an offense under UAE laws," Philippine Ambassador Libran Cabactulan said in his report to the DFA.

The embassy, citing information from the Gulf state, said that although there were no formal complaints yet about the matter, mobile phone technology, including bluetooth capability, would enable everyone to send and receive obscene images. If caught, such person faces criminal charges.

Cabactulan said that in an Islamic country such as the UAE, law enforcers have expressed concern that power in the hands of consumers with access to bluetooth technology poses challenges for public morality.

There are about 170,000 Filipinos, mostly workers, living in the Emirates.

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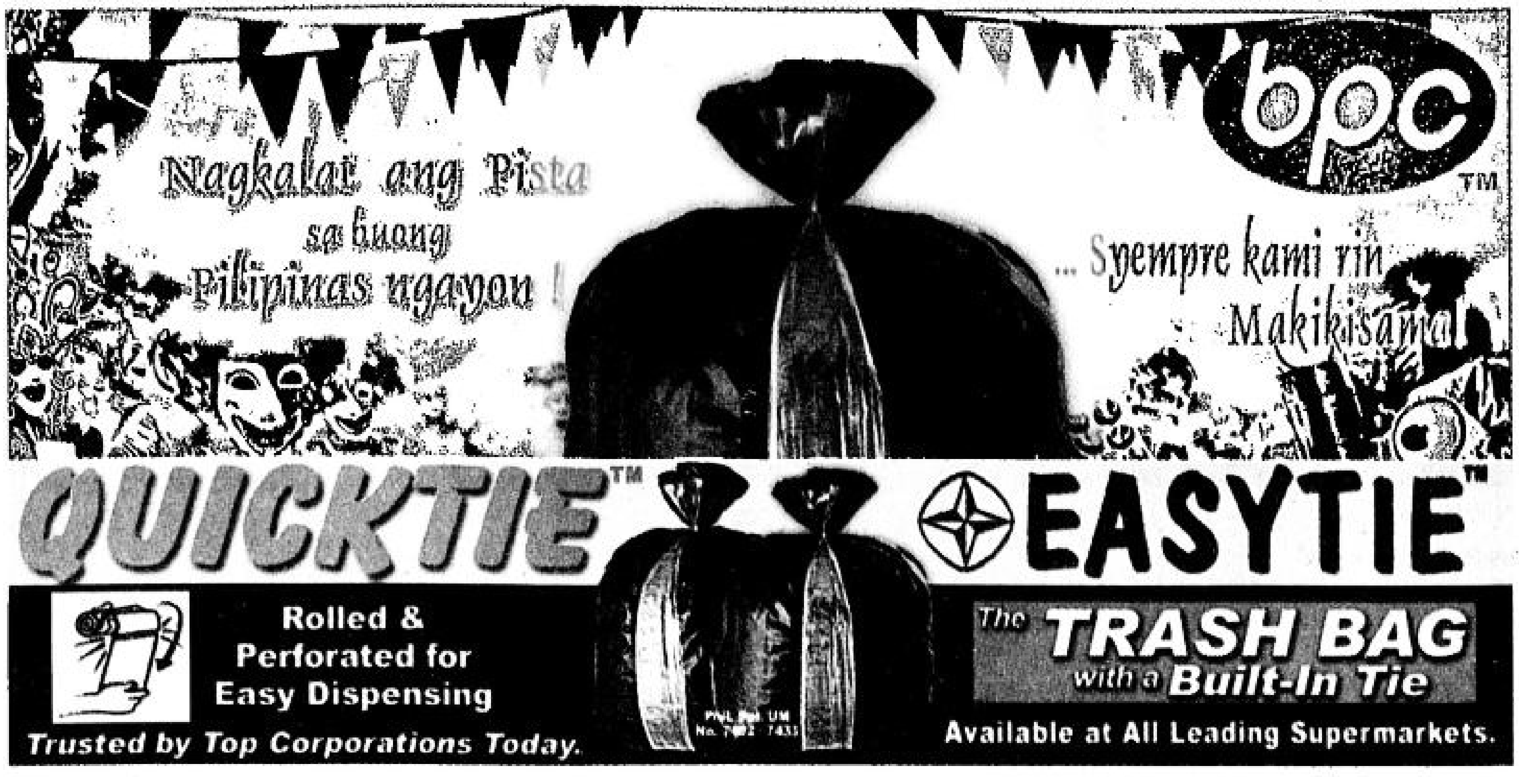
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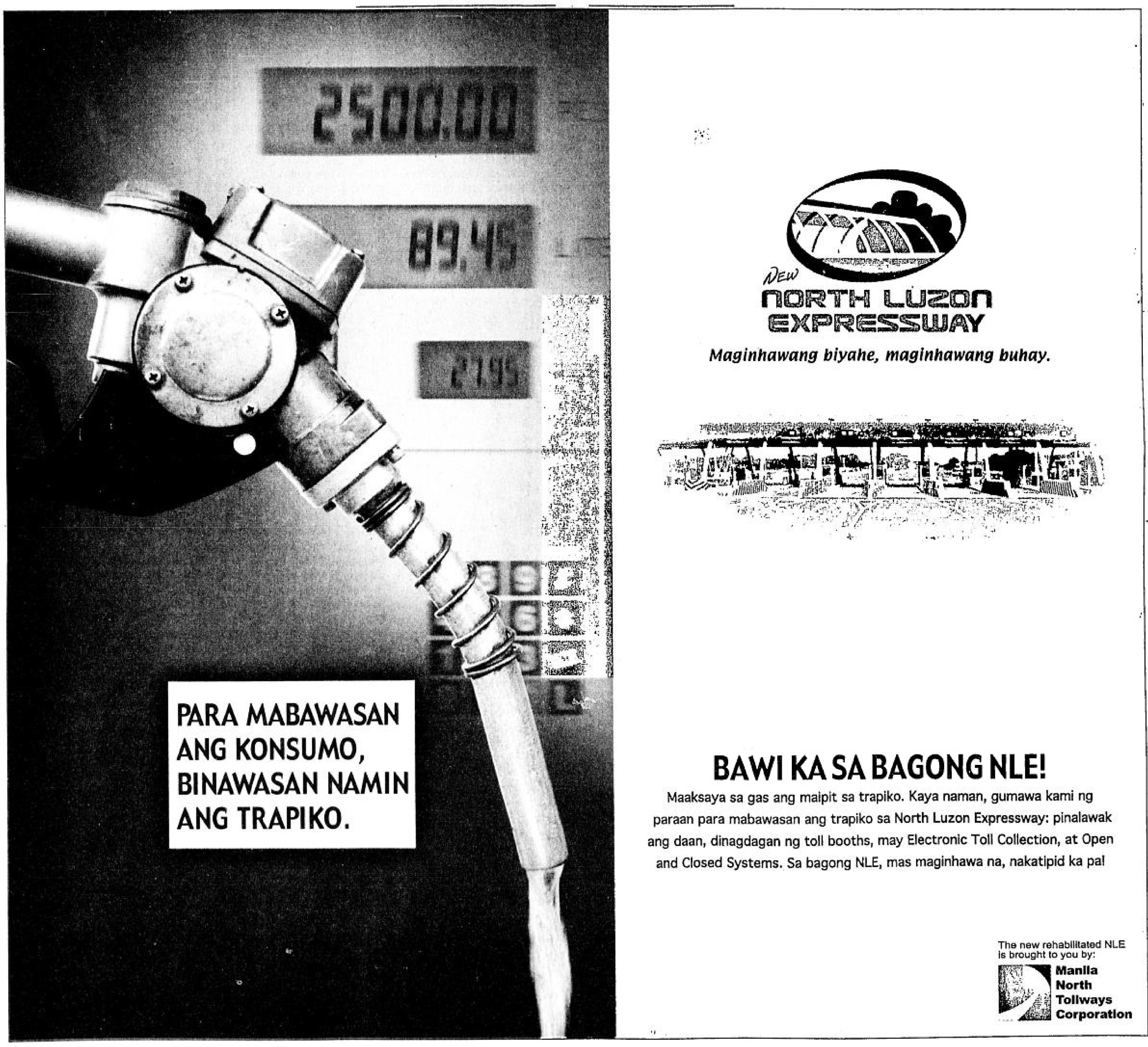
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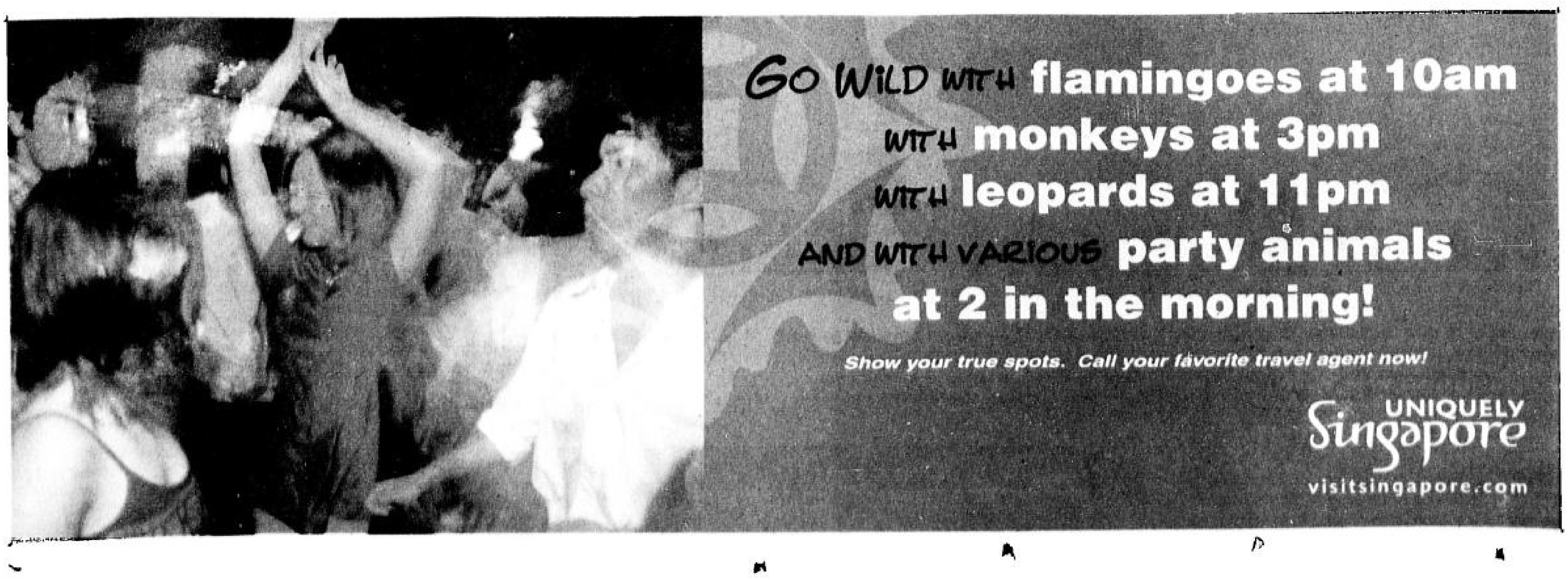
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Gonzalez told to stop talking about Jalosjos

From page A1

lawmaker from Zamboanga del Norte would be pardoned on humanitarian grounds because of deteriorating health.

Told that certain groups wanted him to stop commenting on the Jalosjos case, Gonzalez said: "What kind of statement is that? Tell them that if they do not ask me, then I would not have to answer. They should tell the media to stop talking to me."

Disservice to GMA

Copa secretary general Pastor "Boy" Saycon said Gonzalez was doing President Macapagal-Arroyo a "great disservice" by floating the possibility of a pardon for Jalosjos—and talking at length about it—when he himself had admitted that Malacañang had yet to decide on it.

"He should refrain from talking about it already," Saycon told the INQUIRER. "It's unfair because it's the President who's getting all the flak."

Dante Jimenez, founding chair of Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption, suspected that Malacañang deliberately floated the issue of Jalosjos' pardon to assess public opinion.

"Now that many sectors are opposing the idea, I don't think the proposal will take off," Leonard de Vera, chair of the Equal Justice for All Movement, told the INQUIRER on Wednesday.

Influence

Gonzalez is bringing up the issue as a form of "preemptive influence" on Ms Arroyo, according to Saycon.

Since last week, the justice secretary, himself a former congressman, has been curiously talkative about the possibility of Jalosjos getting a "conditional pardon" because of his lingering heart ailment.

He even cited a so-called House resolution purportedly signed by 50 congressmen urging Ms Arroyo to grant their ex-colleague executive clemency.

But Manila Rep. Ernesto Nieva has since clarified that the supposed resolution that he had signed was just a "letter of appeal."

Saycon said Gonzalez and Jalosjos were "obviously close because they served the same Congress."

"But now that he's the justice secretary, he should be more cautious with the things that he's saying," Saycon said.

He also said that instead of issuing statements tilting toward Jalosjos' pardon, Gonzalez should just put the issue to rest.

'Not stupid'

"We have much more pressing problems to deal with," he said.

GONZALEZ

Gonzalez sought to put the matter "in perspective" by saying: "I was not looking for an issue [to quarrel over]. I was just being asked questions, and I'm not stupid to just say 'No comment.'"

He insisted that when he told the INQUIRER on Saturday that Jalosjos could get "a conditional pardon with parole conditions" he was just talking about "possibilities."

The INQUIRER had asked him about Jalosjos' appeal after Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said on Thursday that Malacañang would ask the opinion of the Department of Justice on the case.

'Major setback'

But possibility or not, a pardon for the man convicted in 1997 of raping an 11-year-old will be blocked by the opposition in the Senate.

Speaking in behalf of the minority bloc, Sen. Jamby Madrigal, chair of the Senate committee on youth, women and family relations, said such a pardon would be "a major setback for child rights advocates" and "disrespectful of the judicial system that has found him liable for statutory rape.

"That's outrageous," Madrigal said. "You can't pardon a convicted child rapist. It's simply beyond logic and common sense."

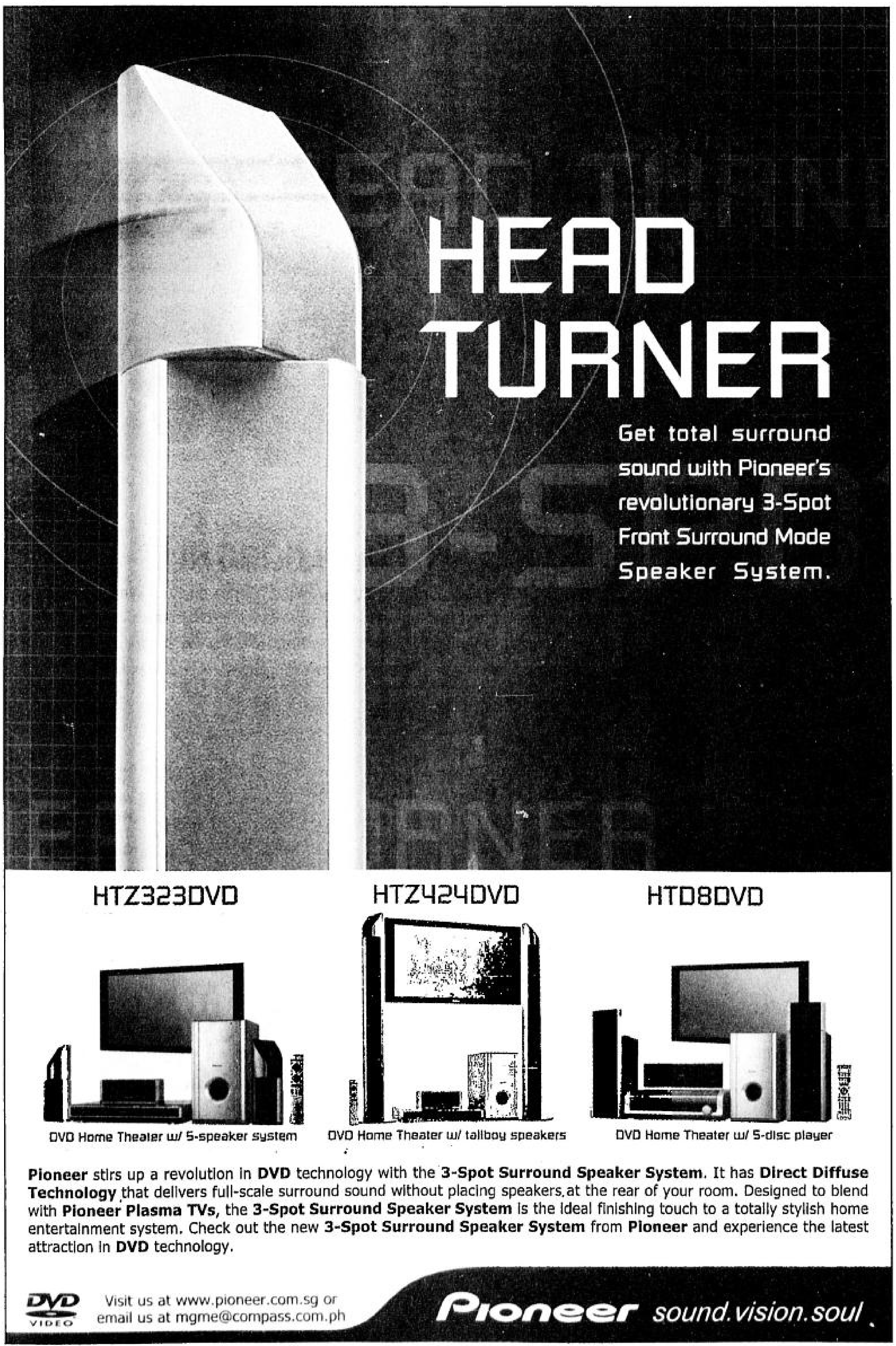
She called on Ms Arroyo "to observe circumspection in the exercise of her presidential powers.

Rule of law

"While I commiserate with Congressman Jalosjos' family, we must respect the rule of law and ensure that the penalty imposed by the courts would be enforced equally, regardless of social standing and position," the senator said.

Madrigal earlier had a run-in with Gonzalez, particularly the prosecutors of the DOJ, for dropping charges against suspected "cybersex" operator Roland F.L. Thys, a Belgian national.

"The tentacles of the rich and powerful international pornography rings operating in our country have reached the confines of the distinguished halls of the Department of Justice," she had said. *With a report from Michael Lim Ubac*



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2 solons defend Mike . . .

From page A1

compensation agreement for two supposed drug-bust missions.

Javier said Ong was clearly motivated by money when she accused President Macapagal-Arroyo's husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, of blocking the government's payment to her of at least P3 million. Puentevella said Ong was destroying her own credibility with her "unfounded" accusations against the First Couple.

Smear job

But Ong continued to air her complaint about the President's husband, saying he "still has no business blocking the release" of her agent's fees. She also said, among other things, that he had once assigned her to do a smear job on then senatorial candidate Bong Coo.

Ong said every case operation plan—or the contract signed between an intelligence agent and the unit that contracted his/her services—was a classified document kept in the archives of the Philippine National Police.

She said this was why the past PNP chiefs, who had access to classified documents, had told her to collect her fees from the remaining funds of the defunct Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force (PAOCTF), the unit that contracted her services.

National security matter

"A contract is a national security matter, and it's not something that you carry around with you," said Ong, who had earlier been told to present her contract if she wanted to collect the P3 million supposedly due her for Operations "Athena" and "Cyclops" conducted in 1997-99.

She said the President, or even PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay, could "declassify" the contract, and a copy could be given to Susana Vargas, deputy executive secretary for finance and administration.

It is Vargas who controls the PAOCTF funds that had been transferred to the Presidential Anti-Crime Commission, according to Ong.

'Unquantifiable'

Mike Arroyo himself had denied Ong's accusation and said he had been giving her financial assistance since 2001.

"She's biting the hand that's feeding her. She's so ungrateful," he said Wednesday.

To which Ong said yesterday: "He called me ungrateful for P500,000? What I did for him cannot be quantified."

In 2001, Ong linked Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson to money laundering, drug trafficking and even kidnapping-for-ransom activities.

Her accusations were never proven in court but were widely believed then to have been planned by Mike Arroyo, allegedly to weaken Lacson's chances in the May 2004 presidential election.

She has since been staying at a safehouse in Camp Aguinaldo under the Department of Justice's Witness Protection Program.

Ong said earlier this week that she wrote the President in October to seek help in collecting her agent's fees so she could start a new life. But Vargas, who had agreed to release P3 million from the PACC funds, changed her mind, supposedly on orders of Ms Arroyo's husband, Ong said.

Voucher for P21,000

By Ong's account, Mike Arroyo gave her P18,000 for her mother's medical needs after she submitted receipts from Mercury Drug.

She said she went to his office at the LTA Building on Perea Street in Makati City where she signed a voucher for P21,000. But she said the actual cash received was only P18,000.

Ong said the voucher was prepared by Mike Arroyo's accountant-secretary, Vicky Toh, whom she described as "a woman who looked like Mike Arroyo."

In a privilege speech in September 2003, Lacson said the President's husband had deposited millions of pesos in campaign contributions in several bank accounts in his name, that of Toh, and that of "Jose Pidal."

Ong yesterday said she subsequently appeared on a TV talk show defending Mike Arroyo even if, she said, she had in her possession a number of checks from one of the "Jose Pidal" accounts at Union Bank on Perea Street.

"And he called me ungrateful," Ong told the INQUIRER.

Funds from PCSO

Ong also confirmed that Mike Arroyo had given her P107,000 for her father's medical needs in July 2003. "But the funds came from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office and were facilitated by Dante Jimenez," she said.

She also said that at the height of the "Jose Pidal" scandal, Ms Arroyo's husband called her to the LTA Building for a meeting with members of the Villaraza Angcangco law firm.

"He wanted me to file a libel case against Lacson," she said, adding that the case was never filed because "I did not sign the documents, because I did not believe in it."

And during the election campaign, Ong said, Mike Arroyo assigned her to do a "demolition job" on the Pag-asa party of presidential candidate Raul Roco by "attacking" senatorial candidate Bong Coo.

Ong said the plan was to link Coo to drug syndicates.

She said Mike Arroyo sent his supposed PR man Nemesio "Boyet" Antonio to assist her in the demolition job, using "testimonies" that she and Antonio had solicited from drug convicts at the Women's Correctional in Mandaluyong City.

No PR

But in a letter sent yesterday to the INQUIRER, Antonio denied he was a PR man for the President's husband. He also assailed the INQUIRER for reporting that he visited Ong at her safehouse Tuesday night as an "emissary" of Arroyo.

"If visiting a friend in distress is a crime, then I am guilty. It is just tragic that this had to be merged with wanton disregard of fair play and accuracy, all for the sake of biased sensationalism," Antonio said.

He said the report on his visit to Ong was "despicable," "malicious," "one-sided" and written by one who "obviously ignored professionalism and ethics in coming out with her story by not getting my side first or that of the First Gentleman, if I was indeed [his] PR man and emissary ... to Ms Ong."

The INQUIRER learned that Antonio was the publisher of Women's Journal and Insider magazines, two publications under the government-sequestered Journal group. He was among top officials who were recently replaced after the court ordered the government to return the Journal group to its former owners.

Blackmail

Congressman Javier said Ong should be reminded that Ms Arroyo had never used her position to protect her husband from controversy.

"In fact, she never interfered in the Senate investigation on the Pidal controversy, which the Senate blue ribbon committee terminated upon the failure of Senator Lacson to substantiate his allegations against the First Gentleman," Javier said.

According to Javier, Vargas phoned Ms Arroyo's husband only after Ong claimed that she had the latter's approval to receive the funds.

"Mrs. Vargas was being prudent because Mary Ong has been twisting the issue to build a strong case to pressure and blackmail the administration to come up with the money," Javier said.

'Financial mercenary'

Puentevella said Ong had "gone a long way in destroying her effectivity and credibility as a witness in the cases filed against criminal elements.

"When people reveal themselves to be financial mercenaries, the courts and the public would discount their testimony as self-serving and tainted. She should talk with the authorities with whom she negotiated or perfected an agreement instead of involving the First Couple in her troubles," he said.

'Absurd'

Puentevella also said it was "absurd" of Ong to say that the government was trying to gag her.

"The President has consistently shown delicadeza by opting to stay out of issues involving the First Gentleman or any [other] member of the First Family. Ong's claim is laughable," he said.

Gov't to sell bonds to OFWs in US to raise P5.6B

From page A1

Interestingly, Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong and Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin were clueless about the Makabayan ICs although the OEA had spent the past two months touring the United States to promote the investment papers, according to External Affairs Undersecretary Danny Consumido.

"I am not aware of any Makabayan certificates to be issued by the government," Amatong said at a briefing in Malacañang. Boncodin was equally as surprised as Amatong, noting she had never heard of such a plan.

Amatong raised her eyebrows when the INQUIRER showed her a copy of an OEA press release, which said that External Affairs Secretary Edgardo D. Pamintuan was planning to launch the Makabayan certificate early this year in partnership with the Department of Finance (DOF).

In the concept paper, the DOF plays a key role in the investment scheme. It is expected to draw up the mechanics for the sale of the Makabayan ICs, help the OEA choose a conduit bank ("a commercial bank with branches in strategic areas in the US") and come up with rules for the disbursement of funds.

Brainchild

In an interview, Consumido said the Makabayan investment scheme was the brainchild of Pamintuan and his OEA staff shortly after the agency's creation.

Consumido furnished the INQUIRER with a letter of Pamintuan to Amatong explaining the concept of the Makabayan ICs.

"I hope that the OEA and DOF could immediately work on the mechanics of the program and we could have a program launch before Christmas," Pamintuan said in his letter dated Nov. 23, 2004.

Consumido said the OEA came up with the scheme after a study showed that OFWs were reluctant to send more money back home because they felt their money was being wasted by relatives who spent it on food binges or appliances instead of saving or investing it.

Minimum of $100

For a minimum of $100, an OFW can invest in a five-year Makabayan IC that "will earn annual interests depending on the growth of specific investment projects."

Consumido said each investor would be allowed to choose from a menu of micro enterprises handpicked by the OEA so he could decide where his money would be invested.

"It can be a piggery or *sari-sari* store to be run by his relatives in his hometown," said Consumido.

Facilitator

While OFWs could simply send their money directly to their representatives for investment purposes, Consumido said investing through Makabayan ICs was better because they could depend on the OEA as a "facilitator" to help the beneficiary in setting up the business and training its staff.

"We are better organized so we can be more productive," Consumido said.

The OEA plans to establish a nationwide task force that would monitor and evaluate all projects funded by the Makabayan ICs. A secretariat or implementing committee would be set up to handle day-to-day operations of the program, and project management teams would be formed in all areas where there are Makabayan-funded ventures.

"If need be, contractual employees shall be hired for the program," the OEA said.

100,000 small enterprises

Consumido, however, could not explain how many contractuals or how much in funds the OEA would need to provide livelihood training and project monitoring to the 100,000 small enterprises that it was targeting to put up from the $100 million proceeds of Makabayan.

He said he could not yet estimate how much the OFWs would earn from their investments (or if they were better off putting their money in the bank) because earnings from the Makabayan ICs were dependent on the yield of the specific project chosen by the investor.

"The investor will have to take the risk," said Consumido.

He expressed confidence that the OEA project management team in each area would be able to verify how much the Makabayan investor was making from the piggery or sari-sari store.

The OEA, created by the President in October in the middle of the government austerity program, has been criticized as a "superbody" seeking a P100 million budget to duplicate the work of regular line departments such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the National Anti-Poverty Commission.

Grassroots support

Originally named Office of Constituency Affairs, the OEA's battle cry is to "bring the government closer to the people and the people closer to the government," including groups hostile to the Arroyo administration, and to "build grassroots support' for the government.

Pamintunan said in October that the OEA would link the government to hundreds of "constituency" groups around the country, from farmers, copra traders, public transport groups and the religious sector to indigenous communities, labor organizations and antigovernment groups.

Political attaché

The OEA has its own political attaché in the United States to harness some 3 million Filipino immigrants and expatriates on the US West Coast.

The agency was patterned after US President George W. Bush's Office for Faith-Based and Community Initiative.

Bush's first act when he was elected US president in 2000 was to create the office to "democratize access" of nongovernment and people's organizations to government funding and assistance, according to Pamintuan.

'How could God let this happen?'

From page A1

worst affected by the Indian Ocean disaster.

But is the explanation that simple?

Last week's catastrophe has revived a debate which raged in Europe after the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, one of the 18th century's worst natural disasters which led many figures of the enlightenment, such as Voltaire, to question the existence of a God who allowed such catastrophes.

Is Asia cursed?

The question then was why should Lisbon be so abominably cursed? The question now is: Why Asia?

"Allah has His own way," said K.H. Ma'aruf, chair of the Indonesian Council of Ulema (MUI), the highest authority on Islam in Indonesia, adding that as "humble humans, there is no way we can comprehend His infinite wisdom.

"A true believer should believe that his fate and those of others are entirely in the hands of Allah. If their loved one were killed in the disaster and they survive, it is because of Allah's will," he said.

In the staunchly Muslim province of Aceh nobody appeared to have lost their faith—survivors recited holy Koranic verses while looking for lost relatives or staying at refugee shelters.

Disaster has message

In India, Hindu clerics hurriedly performed religious rites for victims whose bodies were found and comforted grieving relatives.

"It is a natural phenomenon which has manifested because of a multitude of human mistakes on sky, earth and water," said Hindu cleric Madambakkam Sreenivasa Bhattacharyar, chief priest of the famous Tirupati Tirumala Temple.

"This kind of disaster also happens to tell the people of the existence of a superpower. But just like in a game of carrom when you hit a coin, others get hit, the innocent and sinful both get affected. It is not a test of faith," he said.

Most painful test

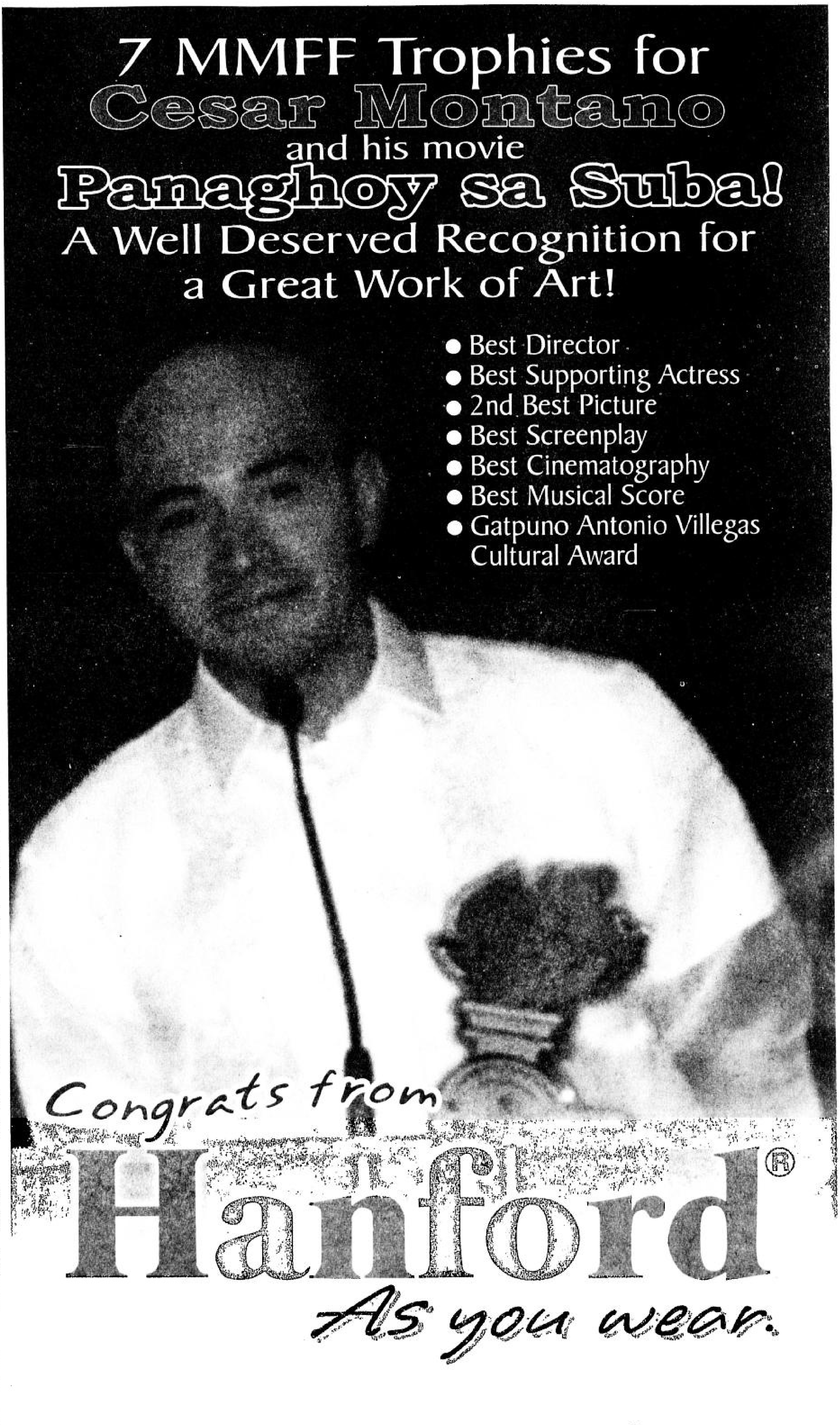
In the Vatican, Pope John Paul II told thousands of Roman Catholics gathered Sunday at St. Peter's Square that God had not abandoned the people, calling the calamity "the most difficult and painful of tests."

In London, the Archbishop of Canterbury said it was inevitable people would question their faith but that belief had "survived tests again and again, not because it comforts or explains but because believers cannot deny what has been shown or given to them."

Even Jesus ...

Asked if the people who suffered were being punished, the Anglican bishop of South Sydney in Australia, Robert Forsyth, said: "I think almost certainly not."

"Even Jesus died complaining to God," he said. *AFP*



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Oil firms cut gasoline . . .

From page A1

liter on Dec. 24, 2004.

Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Petron Corp., Caltex Philippines Inc., Total (Philippines) Corp. and Seaoil Petroleum Corp. implemented the price reduction at noon yesterday.

Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc. and Eastern Petroleum Corp. followed at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., respectively. Flying V effected the same price reduction yesterday.

Shell and Seaoil, the first two companies to announce a price cut, said the softening of world oil prices prompted them to cut prices.

Diesel discounts

While Shell and Seaoil did not slash diesel prices, both said they would continue to give diesel discounts of P1 a liter to the public transport sector. Shell is offering diesel discounts at 50 service stations across the country.

Data from the Department of Energy showed that world oil prices had softened in December.

The benchmark Dubai crude dropped to a December average of $34.20 a barrel from $34.87 in November.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for finished products fell to $44.81 a barrel last month from $52.45 in November.

MOPS-based diesel declined to $51.33 a barrel in December from $56.82 the month before.

Downward trend

"We hope that the downward trend will be sustained in the coming months," Energy Secretary Vincent Perez said in a statement yesterday.

Last year, gasoline prices rose 13 times for a cumulative increase of P7.45 a liter. Diesel prices jumped 15 times for a total increase of P7 a liter, while LPG prices rose 13 times for a cumulative increase of P13.15 a kilogram.

Higher tariff

The gasoline price reduction yesterday came despite the implementation of a higher tariff on crude and petroleum product imports starting Jan. 1.

From 3 percent, the levy was raised to 5 percent, a move that could rake in an additional P5.5 billion in annual revenues for the government.

The new import levy could translate to a corresponding pump price increase of 35 to 40 centavos a liter.

'Trust fund should live . . .

From page A1

being offered by banks, particularly after the 1997 Asian currency turmoil which led to the collapse of many businesses.

The trustee-banks which had invested in the companies that eventually suspended debt payments aroused the ire of many of their clients.

Although the BSP requires banks to disclose the risks inherent in the products they sell and to follow strict documentation procedures, some banks tend to neglect this responsibility, leading to conflicts with clients, which eventually end up in the courts.

In response, the BSP recently tightened regulatory control on the banks' trust activities. It ordered the banks to phase out common trust funds (CTFs) and shift to what it believes to be a much more superior product called the unit investment trust fund (UITF).

Directed trust fund

The BSP has also started to look into the so-called directed trust fund, the product that is the subject of Concepcion Poblador's complaint against Citibank.

Directed trust funds are agreements in which the client gives the trustee-bank the discretion to place his or her money where it wants.

Poblador is not the only client to have brought her complaint about directed trust funds to the BSP nor is Citibank the only bank to have found itself in hot water over this product.

In 2003, for instance, Asia Trust Bank was sued by the De Ocampo family over P23 million in funds that it entrusted to the bank, which in turn lent the money to a subsidiary of Ramcar, the car battery manufacturer. When Ramcar defaulted on its debts and went into receivership, the family was left holding the bag. AsiaTrust argued in its defense that no bank could have anticipated that the company would collapse.

AsiaTrust and the De Ocampos have settled the dispute as the bank was able to sell the pieces of property mortgaged by Ramcar, according to BSP insiders.

In an interview with the INQUIRER, BSP Gov. Rafael Buenaventura said the central bank was reorganizing the banking system's trust activities to address snowballing complaints from bank clients.

"That's why we're going to discourage the CTFs and shift to UITFs," Buenaventura said.

"We're looking at the directed trust funds next," he said.

New rules

The BSP chief said the UITF was a "better" product because it would more realistically reflect underlying market values, thus guiding investors properly and avoiding the misunderstandings with customers concerning the nature of their investments.

Under the new rules drawn up by the BSP, funds accepted as investments in trust can only be placed in liquid investments and tradable financial instruments.

Tradability is premised on the existence of a readily and regularly available two-way quote. Thus, UITFs cannot be directly re-lent by the banks but can only be placed in equities, bonds and high-grade commercial papers, which are traded on the market.

As of June 30, 2004, the trust accountabilities of commercial banks amounted to P700 billion, of which 38 percent, or P270 billion, represented CTFs and about 15 percent, or P105 billion, was in the form of personal trust accounts.

The BSP has allowed a transition period of six months to one year so that banks can unwind their CTFs and shift to UITFs.

Other violations uncovered

Aside from the usual complaints about the nature of investments, the BSP has uncovered other violations among banks relating to trust activities, according to Buenaventura.

One of these is the illegal transfer of loans to trust accounts.

Buenaventura said some banks "pass on" certain loan accounts to their clients to avoid loan-loss provisions, especially because the BSP has adopted a risk-weight approach in measuring capital adequacy.

A bank treasurer told the INQUIRER that one of the country's top banks has resorted to the selling down of loans, that is, passing on bad loan accounts, to clients.

"It's for the bank's window-dressing activities," said the banker, explaining that the banks do so to reduce their non-performing loan ratios.

But the banks continue to pay the interest on these loans so there is no problem for as long as the banks remain in operation, he said.

This would confirm the observation that under the current system, banks have the leeway to transfer risks to save their own skin.

Another common violation cited by Buenaventura was the practice of the informal buyback of debt papers. This means that a bank can sell to a client securities which it arranges to buy back at a pre-agreed price, but without a written agreement.

As a result, there was no stopping a bank from selling the same securities as many times as it can to different clients, the BSP chief said.

Securities custodian

He said this was the reason the BSP was pushing for the establishment of a fixed-income exchange and the third-party custodianship of securities.

"What's important in the fixed income [exchange] is what you call the price discovery, so that when your bank sells you securities, the pricing will be transparent," the BSP chief said.

As an initial step, the BSP has issued tighter rules on securities transactions, particularly repurchase agreements (repos) or purchases of securities with an agreement to sell them at a higher price at a specific date.

Required to tell clients

Bank officials are required to inform clients concerning the basic features of the securities being sold on a "without recourse"—or no return, no exchange—basis, the issuer, financial condition, terms and maturity date, risk factors, investment considerations and liquidity features.

Bank officials are also required to tell clients that:

- Securities are not deposits and do not benefit from insurance applicable to deposits.
- Securities sold on a "without recourse" basis are required to be delivered physically to his designated custodian duly accredited by the BSP.
- The bank or quasi-bank merely acts as broker or dealer and does not guarantee the payment of the security sold on a "without recourse" basis which, in the event of default, the sole credit risk would be borne by the client.

Buenaventura said securities custodianship would ensure that these instruments would not be used in multiple undocumented transactions.

A custodian safeguards the securities of the client, holds title to the securities in a nominee capacity, executes purchase or sale orders, represents clients in corporate actions and conducts mark-to-market valuation, among others.

Debt restructuring

Alongside the debt problems of the firms which were once considered prime borrowers, such as Benpres, Ramcar, Victorias Milling Corp., Philippine Airlines and C&P Homes, are the woes of bank clients who invested in trust funds. These clients may or may not know that their money went into these financially ailing companies.

Based on BSP data, more than half of the debts restructured by banks for borrowers knocked down by the Asian currency crisis have turned sour again. Analysts said that there could be a second or third wave of restructuring for a lot of borrowers and that banks would have no choice but to accept more concessions.

Curb window-dressing

A debt restructuring can cover a whole range of concessions, including the stretching out of maturities, lowering of interest rates and in extreme cases conversion of debt into equity, to give the borrower some room to breathe and chance to revive its business.

Of the P133.24 billion in loans restructured by commercial banks as of Sept. 30, 2004, 53.7 percent were non-performing.

But there is no telling how much of these loans could be "passed on" to the clients through the trust funds. The challenge is for the regulators to curb the window-dressing activities and other violations at the expense of bank clients.

Trust should live up to name

The even bigger challenge is for the banks to reform their trust operations: be more cautious in handling the funds entrusted to them by the investing public, fully disclose and update the clients on the status of investments and assume responsibility if they erred.

In short, any "trust" fund should live up to its name.

Bank clients on the other hand should be more vigilant and not assume that their banks can never go wrong.

The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

25 killed in new Iraq car bomb attacks

BAGHDAD, Iraq—A suicide attacker blew up an explosives-laden car outside a police academy south of Baghdad during a graduation ceremony, killing 20 people. A second car bomber killed five Iraqi policemen—bringing the death toll to at least 90 so far this week in surging violence aimed at derailing this month's elections.

AN IRAQI girl about to enter Fallujah waits to be checked as she stands behind sandbags. AFP

Despite the mounting attacks and death toll, Iraq's interim leader again insisted the ballot would go ahead as planned.

"We will not allow the terrorists to stop the political process in Iraq," Prime Minister Ayad Allawi said Wednesday. "The elections process is the basis for the deepening of the national unity in Iraq."

While Allawi and US military commanders insisted parliamentary elections must be held as scheduled on Jan. 30, interim President Ghazi al-Yawer, who holds only ceremonial powers, left open the possibility that the vote could be postponed.

"I think that we should continue working on how to hold the elections on schedule, but we should not lack the courage if we see that this is impossible," said al-Yawer, a Sunni Muslim tribal leader.

If the election takes place, it is expected to shift power to the Shiite Muslim community, an estimated 60 percent of the population that has been dominated by the Sunni Arab minority since modern Iraq was created after World War I.

The insurgency is believed to be led by Sunnis and Saddam Hussein's supporters. US officials believe the violence is aimed at blocking the elections and causing worse chaos in hopes of driving out the US-led military coalition. They say postponing the vote would be tantamount to conceding victory to the militants.

The car bomb outside a gate of the police academy in Hillah, about 96 kilometers south of Baghdad, was the latest in a series of attacks on Iraqi security forces. More than 1,300 policemen were killed in the final four months of 2004, the Interior Ministry said Wednesday.

Police Capt. Hady Hatef in Hillah said the blast occurred during a graduation ceremony at the academy and killed at least 20 people, including civilians. Polish Lt. Col. Artur Domanski, a spokesperson for the multinational force in Hillah, said at least 10 policemen were among the dead and 41 people were wounded.

In the restive city of Baqouba, 48 km northeast of Baghdad, a suicide attacker rammed his car into a joint police and Iraqi National Guard checkpoint, killing five policemen and wounding eight other Iraqis, a US spokesperson, Maj. Neal O'Brien, said. The driver was also killed.

In a separate attack, gunmen killed police Col. Khalifa Hassan and his driver as they headed to work in Baqouba, said Dr. Ahmed Fouad at Baqouba General Hospital.

Between 20,000 and 30,000 insurgents are operating throughout Iraq and are directed by former officials of Saddam's regime based in Syria, Iraq's intelligence chief said in an interview published Wednesday by a London-based Arab newspaper.

"We officially call them terrorists," Maj. Gen. Mohammed Abdullah al-Shahwani told Asharq Al-Awsat. "They are between 20,000 and 30,000 armed men operating all over Iraq, mainly in the Sunni areas where they receive moral support from about 200,000 people."

Al-Shahwani predicted attacks would fade out within a year.

Allawi said Wednesday that "there is no doubt we will crush these terrorists and we will guarantee security and stability for our people in the near future."

He said Iraqi security forces are being equipped with new weapons and armored vehicles.

"Hostile force are still trying to cause harm and damage, but the Iraqi forces are becoming better, and they have captured and killed some terrorists," Allawi told reporters.

He said security forces recently arrested two aides of Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who is believed to be one of the insurgency's leaders.

"They were detained in Mosul along with three or four others and they have started confessing now to Iraqi security about the networks they run in order to harm our people," Allawi said.

In other violence, an explosives-filled car following a convoy of US and Iraqi troops detonated in western Baghdad on Wednesday, killing two Iraqi civilians and wounding 10, police said. No troops were hurt.

The attack came as a funeral procession was held nearby for the governor of Baghdad, Ali al-Haidari, who was assassinated Tuesday. It was not clear if the bomb targeted the mourners, which included Iraqi officials, or the troop convoy. The Ansar al-Sunnah Army, a radical Islamic group, claimed responsibility. *AP*

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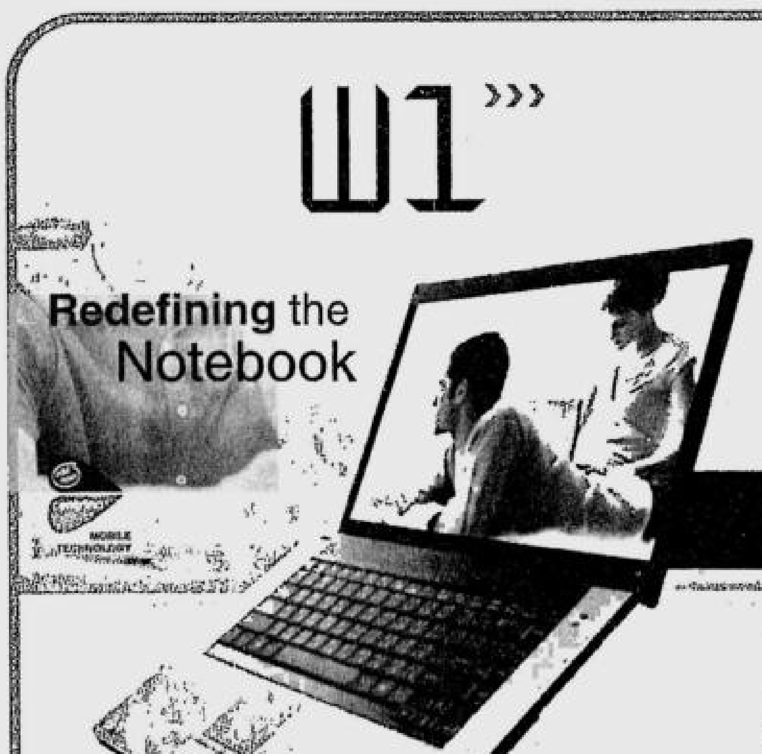

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Sri Lanka wave victims grapple with sex abuse

BATAPOLA, Sri Lanka—Exhausted after barely surviving the Asian tsunami, 17-year-old Nelum was lying on the cement floor of a relief center when she felt a hand on her knee.

It was her 62-year-old grandfather, who pushed himself on top of her, putting his hand over her mouth, recalled Nelum, who asked that her surname not be given.

"I kept shaking my head and tried to push him off with all my might," she said, tears rolling down her face.

Another refugee heard the scuffling and rescued the teenager, yanking her grandfather off her.

Already struggling to meet survivors' basic needs, Sri Lankan authorities face a shocking new problem: sexual abuse of traumatized victims, including children.

At least three other cases of child sexual abuse in relief centers have been reported since the tsunami struck Dec. 26, said Sujeeva Amarasena, chief pediatrician at Karapitiya hospital, the main one in the country's south.

Two gang rapes of woman survivors have been confirmed outside the camps, he said.

The cases have prompted authorities to step up security at the island's makeshift relief centers, many of them overcrowded and understaffed.

The tsunami killed more than 30,000 people in Sri Lanka, and left as many as 1 million left homeless.

D.W. Prathapasinghe, chief of police in the country's south, said it was now mandatory that each center has at least two police officers, including a woman.

"The situation is now under control," he said.

The day after her assault, Nelum filed a complaint and police were called in to investigate. She and her 12-year-old sister, Ayesha, were then handed to child welfare authorities in the nearby town of Galle. Her grandfather was taken away by police.

"My biggest fear was that my sister will have had to face my same fate," she said. "At least now she's safe."

In the days immediately after the tsunami, 335 people, including Nelum and her family, camped out in a single classroom in a schoolhouse in Batapola, 95 km from Colombo.

A woman—who lost her 5-year-old daughter, husband and mother to the waves—said she had been repeatedly harassed at the camp on the way to the toilet.

"They were not inmates of the camp. They were from outside," said the woman, who didn't want to be identified. "We now go to the toilet in groups."

Others have left the camp because they fear being abused.

"I have lost my husband and home," said Enoka Pushpakumari, who was leaving the camp to make her way to the house of a distant relative. "I can't face any more tragedy."

Aid groups say Sri Lankan officials should have been better prepared for potential sexual abuse.

Rape was an aspect of Sri Lanka's 20-year-long ethnic war. Activists said they had frequent reports of majority ethnic Sinhalese soldiers raping minority ethnic Tamil women, although few were prosecuted. Tamil rebels fought for independence in the northern and eastern provinces, claiming discrimination by the majority Sinhalese who dominate the government. A fragile ceasefire has halted fighting.

"What's disturbing is that in spite of our years of experience handling the displaced, attention is paid only after incidents occur," said Sunila Abeysekera the rights group Women and Media Collective. *AP*

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Signing the agreement to work hand-in-hand on this timely event are, (sitting L-R) Mr. Dennis Voboril, Agricultural Trade Office Director, US Embassy-Manila, Mr. Michael Spiers, Assistant Regional Director, US Wheat Associates and Mr. Ching Suy Eh, President of Filipino-Chinese Bakery Association, Inc. (FCBAI). (Standing L-R): Mr. Marcos Ong, FCBAI Corporate Secretary, Mr. James Chua, FCBAI Vice President, Mr. Jude Akhidenor, Agricultural Trade Office Attache, US Embassy-Manila, Mr. Benito Ong, FCBAI Treasurer and Mr. Henry Ah, FCBAI Director and Committee Chairman of Bakery Fair 2005.

Bakery Fair 2005, the Third International Exhibition on Bakery & Confectionery Products, Food Service, Catering Supplies & Equipment is a non-profit event organized by the Filipino-Chinese Bakery Association, Inc. will be held on February 18-20, 2005 at the World Trade Center Metro Manila. For more inquiries, please contact the Filipino-Chinese Bakery Association, Inc. (FCBAI) at Tel. Nos. (632) 254-2518, 254-2526, Fax No. 254-2528 Email: fc_bai@hotmail.com.

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Bird flu kills another Vietnam boy

HANOI—A boy in southern Vietnam has died from the lethal strain of bird flu that has killed 22 people in the communist nation since late 2003, medical officials said Thursday.

A 6-year-old boy from the southern Dong Thap province died after suffering high fever and respiratory failure on Dec. 30 only three hours after being admitted for treatment, said Nguyen Ngoc Diep, deputy director of the provincial hospital.

Deputy Director of the Hospital of Tropical Diseases in Ho Chi Minh City, Tran Tinh Hien, confirmed that tests conducted on the boy a few days later proved that he was positive with the H5N1 virus.

"However, the reason for the boy's contraction of the virus was not clear as no evidence of his direct contact with infected poultry has been found," Diep said.

The first bird flu death reported in Vietnam in 2005 was 9-year-old boy, Thach Phung, from the southern province of Tra Vinh.

Doctors confirmed that the boy had been in direct contact with infected poultry in his native village before being treated in hospital for high fever.

A 16-year-old girl from southern Tay Ninh province tested positive for H5N1 and is in critical condition in Ho Chi Minh City.

Despite confirmation by doctors, Hanoi denied the two deaths, saying the 16-year-old girl was the only victim of the deadly virus. *AFP*

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Occupation: Engineering Student/ Bartender
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Character to be filled:
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Occupation: Bar Owner
Age Range: 36 to 42

Character to be filled:
BARTON
Occupation: Brand Manager
Age Range: 28 to 32

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J2 Ivy
J3 Karyn
J4 Michelle
J5 Mitzie
V1 Angelica
V2 Issa
V3 Joanna
V4 Kharen
V5 Suzy
P1 Antonio
P2 Arnel
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Egypt probed over nuke experiments

VIENNA—The UN nuclear watchdog is investigating Egypt for small, undeclared nuclear experiments that could be related to atomic weapons development, diplomats said.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit swiftly denied that his country had done anything counter to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The experiments involved making uranium metal, which could be used to make weapons-grade plutonium, and carrying out the first steps of uranium enrichment by making uranium tetrafluoride (UF4), one diplomat said.

But another diplomat close to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said no uranium was actually enriched, referring to the process that makes nuclear fuel but what can also be the explosive core of atomic bombs.

The experiments were "small stuff, nothing and goes back in history all the way to the 1950s," he said.

"These are small sporadic experiments which have been done over the years. This is not Iran, this is not South Korea," he added, referring to Iran which the IAEA is investigating on US charges that it is secretly developing nuclear weapons and South Korea, which has admitted to carrying out rogue nuclear experiments.

Most of the work was apparently done before 1982, when Egypt signed a safeguards agreement with the IAEA, opening itself from that point on to inspections, the diplomat said.

"There may have been a nuclear weapons program but 50 years ago when Nasser was the president," he added.

The IAEA was tipped off by articles published by Egyptian scientists and has been investigating Egypt intensively since last summer, he said, adding that the watchdog was currently evaluating samples gathered in Egypt in December and should be able to say more in about two weeks. *AFP*

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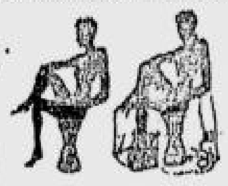

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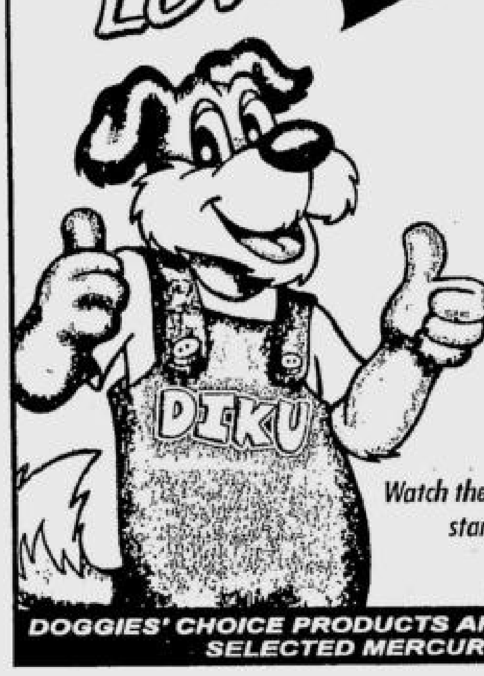

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ISSN 0116-2642
INQUIRER
Vol. 20 No. 30

OPINION

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THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, INC. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 /
528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.
•100% soy ink•

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Exorcising demons

EDITORIAL

THE SURVEYS at the end of last year showed that most Filipinos remain optimistic of their prospects in 2005. Past surveys have always found that majority of Filipinos feel optimistic about the coming year. What has changed is that there are more Filipinos this year who do not see a rosy year ahead. But the basic survey finding is still this: optimism—though it may not exactly spring eternal—is still the sense of the majority.

However, this doesn't mean the people are as optimistic about the government's ability to solve problems—or at least not to add to them. Which is at the heart of the people's response to the appeal of President Macapagal-Arroyo for the public to exorcise the demons of skepticism. We cannot imagine how anyone—except the Palace's spin doctors—can respond to this call of the President without reservations.

Optimism doesn't just spring from a sunny disposition; it springs from experience. And this far in her presidency, the Filipino people do not have the kind of experiences that would give them reason for such optimism.

Time and again, all we see is the big gulf between the fine words coming from the Palace, and the things it actually does. We saw it in the presidential campaign: while speaking of lofty principles, it ran the most ruthless campaign since Marcos' reelection bid in 1969. We saw it in the first few months of the new term of the administration: purely partisan considerations prevailed over competence and rationality in the choice of presidential appointees. We saw it in the President's announcement of an impending fiscal crisis, the waffling that followed on what to do, the lack of follow-through on tough policies stemming from tough decisions, and then confusion as to whether the danger had passed or not. We are seeing it again in the calling of a special session of Congress, and in the absence of firm leadership once Congress convened.

A frustrated former member of President Arroyo's Cabinet once remarked that it was impossible to convince the President of the need to crack the whip. It was as if she were afraid of Congress, when in fact the present administration enjoys an overwhelming majority in the House of Representatives and an impregnable majority in the Senate. Never had a president so much in legislative majority, and yet performed so little.

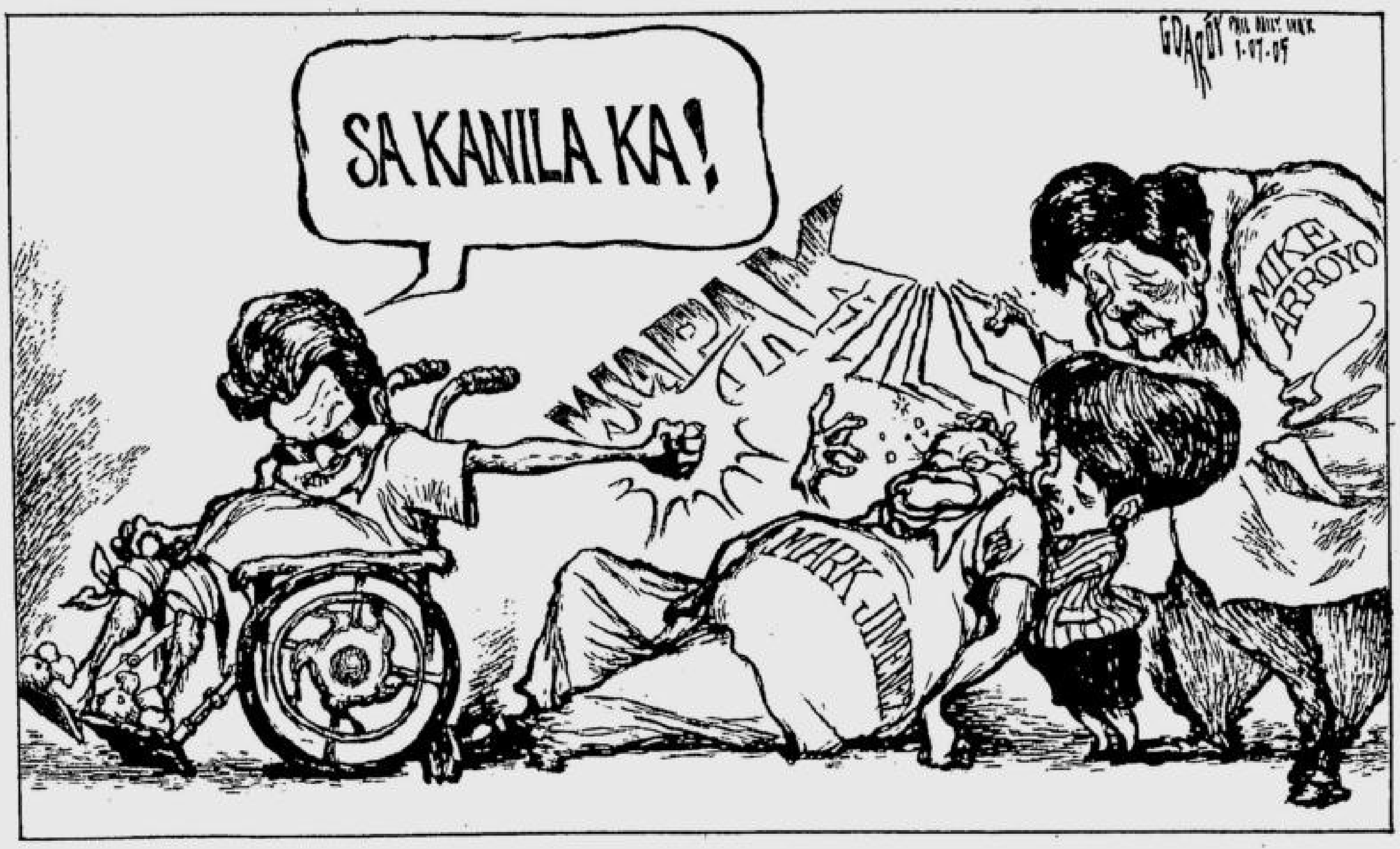
The President herself has said she prefers not to take an adversarial position when it comes to Congress. The impression might be that she truly respects the separation of powers. However, this is a country that has not only a strong presidency, but also one which has proven (time and again) that the president is effective only when Congress is given its cues by the Palace—and the president takes the role of party leader seriously.

Ms Arroyo has also expressed concern about the possible impact on the country's credit ratings of Congress' failure to act on urgent fiscal measures. She may have been confident Congress would come through, but her own personal optimism hasn't been borne out by the facts. Ironically, she herself has proven the limitations to one's ability to exorcise the demons of skepticism: cheery optimism is never enough. Optimism is only different from self-delusion when accompanied by hard work and follow-through.

The whole mess has been revealed by Congress as it wastes a special session trying to muster quorums and then turning its chambers into griping sessions. Senate President Franklin Drilon says Congress cannot debate in plenary what hasn't reached plenary, which means either the President should have talked the bicameral committee into working instead of calling a session, or she failed to get Congress to do the work required to make a special session productive. Either way, for one who prides herself as a perfectionist, the President failed to lay the groundwork for a productive special session.

Congress has failed to do all it can to make the special session worthwhile. There's no excusing this. But it is in the nature of Congress to try to take a mile if you give it an inch—and it always loves to pass the buck. The result, again, either way, is a President further proven to be a failed parliamentary tactician. And a Congress more interested in whining than legislating.

We ask then, in the face of such a glaring failure of executive and legislative leadership: can the people be blamed for being haunted by the demons of pessimism and skepticism? Holy water won't be able to dispel this type of political monster.



RP's double standard of justice

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

IF President Macapagal-Arroyo pardons former Rep. Romeo Jalosjos, it will only show that there is indeed a double standard of justice in the Philippines, one for the poor and the other for the rich, powerful and influential. In the first place, he is not yet eligible for a pardon. The law says a prisoner must first serve his minimum prison term before he can be eligible for parole or a pardon. Jalosjos has not served his. Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez himself admits this.

But members of Congress, an Old Boys Club whose members protect one another, want to make an exception of Jalosjos. Their justification: "humanitarian reasons," since Jalosjos is reportedly ailing. He had a stroke. For this reason, the congressmen, two of whom are Jalosjos' brother and sister, said the convicted rapist should be pardoned.

A "medical abstract" issued by a doctor of the Makati Medical Center said only that Jalosjos has been "advised to be compliant on intake of medications and avoid risk factors which may lead to probable strokes in the future." The risk factors are "hypertension, high cholesterol, emotional and physical stress." The abstract didn't say anything about a presidential pardon.

What the abstract meant was that Jalosjos should take his medications regularly and should watch what he eats and exercise to avoid high blood pressure and high cholesterol. He can do that in prison as well as outside. There are probably thousands of prisoners with hypertension and high cholesterol, as well as emotional and physical stress, but they are not being recommended for pardon.

Jalosjos can be treated for his cardiovascular problem as well inside prison as outside. If he is a good patient and follows his doctor's orders faithfully, he can expect to live a long life and finish his term. There is no urgent need now for him to be pardoned. If there is really justice in this administration, Jalosjos, the astute politician, should be treated like the other prisoners.

But Jalosjos is an exceptional case. He has an influential family and friends. He is a former congressman. And most important, his political machine in Zamboanga made GMA win over FPJ by 100,000 votes in the last presidential elections. It's payback time. So the administration is floating a pardon as a trial balloon to see if there would be opposition to it. If there is not much opposition, Jalosjos is as good as a free man.

Gonzalez cited as a precedent the case of actor Robin Padilla who was also pardoned before he had served his prison sentence. There are other precedents: Bingbong Crisologo, Baby Asistio and Roquito Ablan, who were all pardoned and freed and are now incumbent congressmen. Not to disparage the three, but they seemed to be thoroughly reformed gentlemen who couldn't hurt a fly when they were interviewed together on television recently.

Jalosjos is different. He raped an 11-year-old girl. He has not expressed repentance for it. He has not asked the forgiveness of his victim. He has not served his minimum prison term. What gives him the privilege to be pardoned?

Answer: Because he made GMA win in his bailiwick.

* * *

The Metro Manila Development Authority is planning to extend the number-coding for vehicles until Sunday. The MMDA is trying everything to ease the traffic congestion in Metro Manila but with little success. There are two reasons why, and they are so simple anybody with two eyes can see them. Anybody, that is, except MMDA officials.

These two reasons are: 1. traffic rules are not being enforced strictly, and 2. there are too many vehicles in Metro Manila.

No Metro Manila driver today fears being arrested for traffic violation. The MMDA's traffic aides, being former street sweepers, have an inferiority complex and are afraid to arrest unruly drivers. PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay has pulled out all his policemen from traffic duty, allegedly because many of them were "*kotong* cops." Traffic enforcement is left to the traffic aides. Alas, they're either as crooked as the regular "*kotong* cops" or just plain inept.

The MMDA painted yellow lanes on Edsa where buses are supposed to stay on pain of being arrested if they stray out. But watch Edsa any time of the day. Buses stray out of the yellow lanes and nobody arrests them even if they are in plain sight of traffic aides. Buses and jeepneys rush through pedestrian lanes without heed for the pedestrians crossing the street.

Below the flyover at the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Tandang Sora in Quezon City, jeepneys stop to load and unload passengers on top of the pedestrian lane itself, right in front of a traffic aide directing traffic beside a big sign that says: "Strictly No Loading/Unloading—SB" (for Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte). Oftentimes, a barker stands beside the traffic aide calling passengers for the jeepneys.

On the opposite side of the street, they have put up barricades with another "Strictly No Loading/Unloading" sign to prevent passengers from waiting for rides at the street corner.

But passengers wait for rides exactly beside this big sign, making the mayor's SB initials on the sign a laughingstock.

What is strange is that all these blatant violations are in plain view of the Police Community Precinct only five steps away (I measured it) under the flyover. But the policemen there behave as if they were blind.

Explicit religiosity and the 'values vote'

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

SINCE when has a "praying over" become a photo-op for government officials? The other day I noted in the newspapers a photo of President Macapagal-Arroyo being prayed over by leaders of evangelical churches in the Philippines, together with the President's speech asking for their help to "send away, banish the demons of skepticism" that bedevil our country. The photo showed the President, eyes piously shut, hands clasped in contemplation, with the bishops holding their hands above her in prayer. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is one of the most intelligent presidents in the history of our republic, the one most closely in step with the rest of the modern world. Why would she feel the need to summon publicly the gods to vanquish man-created demons?

One cannot argue with acts of faith, especially in beleaguered times when we face nature's wrath and the sad wages of human folly, but it is their explicitness, their in-your-face quality that bothers me. I recall that religion was once upon a time a quiet conversation with one's god, not a public gala to display devotion for all to see. I know my parents' generation of Filipinos who went to daily Mass and communed with the divine as a regular part of their day, as indispensable as eating, reading and sleeping—they too were devoted but they did not banner that devotion, did not wear it on their sleeves (except, on foreheads, come Ash Wednesday), and kept to themselves. I know too those of my generation who took to the streets and to the hills to live out liberative theologies—and some lived the faith by dying.

I question not the fervor of public officials, but ask merely why, if they truly believed, it has to be in the newspapers or primetime TV or before thousands of screaming fellow believers. The answer lies in democratic politics, and George W. Bush (and his adviser Carl Rove) got it just right when they maneuvered the Christian vote toward a procession that ended in the White House. Indeed, they made sure that state level referenda on values issues were placed on the ballot, the better to ensure that values voters didn't stay home on Election Day. With "ballot initiatives" on issues like same-sex marriage and stem-cell research (and for good measure, stricter liquor and hunting regulations), Bush and Rove lured the conservative voter to rise from his easy-chair, leave the comfort of home, and cast his vote.

How then can we fault the Filipino politician if he courts the blessings of leading evangelical preachers? If the preachers can sway the votes of their flock, why not? That precisely is the nature of democracy!

The problem lies instead in the failure of political movements to command that same allegiance from the Filipino people. The clout of evangelical preachers may be seen as an indictment of the established churches that have ceased to inspire but they indict as well the political movements that have ceased to lead. Religious belief is the only remaining body of thought that has endured—and given the helplessness of the Filipino poor, it is indeed faith alone that sustains many. Religious belief has triumphed by default, not by clashing with secular ideologies of liberalism or communism, but by letting each ideology fall by its own weight. In the Philippines, the rise of the evangelical vote is a symptom of the fall of political parties and activist movements, they who possess political machines that marshal loyalists but offer no compelling vision to match the dreams of their people.

But shouldn't democratic politics likewise counsel against explicit statements of fealty to specific churches? Let us set aside the principled concern that "the separation of Church and State shall be inviolable"—a minor concern for the pragmatic Pinoy. But given religious strife and Muslim restiveness in Mindanao, why do we all assume that the official display of Christian allegiance is altogether harmless and will not sharpen religious divisions? Either because our Islamic brethren are so used to such open religious partisanship and do not care anymore, or we assume that nobody in the Philippines takes official acts of religious devotion seriously anyway—whatever the religion—and simply take them for what they are—a practical move to win votes.

Karl Marx has been quoted as saying: "Democracy is the solved riddle of all constitutions. Here not merely implicitly ...but existing in reality, the constitution is constantly brought back to its actual basis, the actual human being, the actual people, and established as the people's own work."

Truly that is the wonder of democracy. For us Filipinos, however, bringing the "constitution [back to] the actual human being, the actual people" will also bring it perilously close to native shamanaic impulses that cheapen the faith and degrade our politics. To rescue our democracy from the "demons of skepticism," we must precisely evolve an alternative vision of a reformed Philippines so that voters need not turn to the heavens to solve the problems of the world. When the liberal democratic experiment faltered in the late 1960s, Marcos offered his New Society. When that one failed as well, the Left was waiting in the wings with its own millennial program, but it was overtaken by Cory's democratic restoration and it is now divided on whose political line is more wrong, or whose side has been more wronged by its leaders. It is from this secular vacuum of reformist visions that the "demons of skepticism" arise.

* * *

Comments to raul.pangalangan@up.edu.ph

The challenge of Michael Harrington

COMMENTARY

John J. Carroll, S.J.
Institute on Church and Social Issues

MICHAEL Harrington, whose book "The Other America," became the basis for the "war on poverty" of Presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, was born a Catholic and studied at the Jesuit high school in St. Louis and later with the Jesuits at Boston College. Yet, shocked by the degradation of the human person brought about by poverty and neglect, he found that he could no longer believe in God. Harrington remarked at one point that if God existed, he would have to curse Him for the misery which He permitted, so he chose not to believe, and died an atheist.

One can sympathize with Harrington as one reflects on the disasters of recent weeks, the floods here in the Philippines and the horrendous devastation wrought by the tsunamis in the Indian Ocean. And beyond these, the unspeakable human tragedies of Darfur and Iraq, the Congo, and dozens of other places around the globe. Where is God and why does He permit all of this?

We have no final answer to the mystery of evil in the world. But reflection does bring some glimmers of insight.

First, in creating the human person, God gave him intelligence and will so that he might master the world and make it truly a home for humanity. Using this intelligence, men and women of science have undoubtedly opened many doors toward improving human life: diseases brought under control, life expectancy increased two or three times over, widespread literacy, radio and television and jet planes and the Internet. And if war and injustice and natural disasters still cause untold suffering, it may well be because we have chosen our priorities badly.

A professor of mine wrote some 40 years ago, "Science will land man on the cold moon before it succeeds in lifting the burden of poverty from the back of the human race." Could the money spent on space exploration have been better spent in attacking the problem of world poverty and developing early warning systems for earthquakes and tsunamis? Could the money, intelligence and effort which have been devoted to preparing for and making war have been applied instead to building peace? Worldwide and within our own society, could not a fraction of the money spent on cosmetics, animal food, slimming programs and gas-guzzling SUVs have been devoted to social services and education for the poor?

Secondly, a world without suffering would be a world without compassion, and compassion is to my mind the most beautiful of human virtues. Recall the massive outpouring of assistance to the flood victims of a month ago (I am told that even prisoners in Muntinlupa donated their Christmas packages of clothes and asked that their daily food budget be reduced from 30 centavos to 20), and how it made one feel proud to be a member of the human race. Thus, one can imagine God creating a world in which there would be the threat of suffering and tragedy in order that men and women might use their intelligence and will to overcome them, thus sharing in His own characteristic virtue of compassion.

If compassion for the poor drove Harrington to deny God's existence, as an ex-Catholic he remained what has been called a "kerosene can": "the oil is gone, but the smell is still there." Throughout his life, he kept coming back to the problem of God and challenging believers to make their faith a driving force in bringing about social change. He once wrote, "I am a pious apostate, an atheist shocked by the faithlessness of believers, a fellow-traveler of modern Catholicism who has been out of the Church for twenty years." And he saw in the crucified Christ a powerful symbol "because it is God who is subjecting himself to [crucifixion]," revealing God's power in the powerless of this world, a symbol which he saw as having revolutionary potential for both atheist and Christian.

I like to think that when Harrington died in 1989, he was not only surprised to meet the God whose existence he had denied. Perhaps he was even more surprised to find that this compassionate God looked more kindly on him than on many "believers" whose faith is more a form of "fire insurance" against the fires of Hell than a source of compassion and energy for change.

And for us, believers and non-believers, the challenge is to make the compassion which flows so magnificently in times of dramatic events such as floods and tsunamis, a driving force in our everyday lives, and a driving force for change in society. Those calling for our compassion are all around us, though their continual presence makes them almost invisible: the street kids, the mother with her six children who collects trash on our street, fathers of families who are unemployed and "defeated by life." And those who are kept out of our sight: kids in trouble with the law, prisoners, the poor in hospitals and in their slum hovels.

True compassion bids us not only to help them directly as best we can, but like Michael Harrington, to challenge and change the system which oppresses them. To take just one concrete example, a mere 10.3 percent of the income of the wealthiest fifth of our families, distributed to the poorest fifth, would *double* the income of the latter.

Messages from the Jalosjos scandal

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

DURING THE TRIAL of then Rep. Romeo Jalosjos for raping a girl (who was 11 years old at the time the crime was committed but 13 during the trial), the one thing I kept in mind was the image of my own daughter, who was about the same age as the victim. I couldn't bring myself to imagine her going through the ordeal that the girl recounted in detail to her lawyer and subsequently to the INQUIRER. Just reading the transcript of the interview, I felt my insides tightening into a knot, nausea threatening.

At the time, one of the Jalosjos team's defenses was to insist that the congressman, who had paid for the girl's sexual services through her stepfather, did not know the girl's real age. He claimed to have thought she was 18 or so. His lawyers pointed out that the girl was, in the vernacular, "*malaking bulas*" or big-boned. But looking at the girl's pictures, and knowing she was 11 at the time of the rape, most everyone saw through the defense team's ruse.

Anyone who has ever had a daughter or who has beheld a pre-teen female, or who is or has been a pre-teen female, knows there's a huge difference in appearance between an 11-year-old and an 18-year-old. And as the girl herself testified, the congressman, while assessing her like a slab of raw meat, asked her pointblank if she already had her period. Now, why would he ask about her menstrual period if he was sure she was already of age?

But we're not arguing the former congressman's guilt or innocence here. He went through a much-publicized trial, had the means to hire the best possible defense team that money and influence could buy, and was convicted. That conviction was subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court, after which the so-called worthies of the House of Representatives then and only then saw fit to declare him unfit to count among their ranks.

* * *

BUT they still wish to hold him in their embrace, apparently and if Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez is to be believed.

The INQUIRER editorial is right on. Why is the justice secretary speaking and acting like the new lawyer of Jalosjos? And even if a sizeable number of legislators (publish their names, we want to know who they are!) have signed a petition for his release or parole or pardon on "humanitarian grounds," the principle of separation of powers dictates that the justice secretary defend the actions and decisions of his own department's prosecutorial team. Unless, as alter ego of the President, Gonzalez is really implementing the wishes of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

If that were true, then I can only say shame on her, for she knows full well the burden that violence against women and girls can inflict on its victims. Hadn't she spoken out in public herself about the sexual harassment of her daughter Luli, who was a young adult at the time? Will she have us believe that so heinous a crime as the rape of a child can be mitigated by political influence?

When the former congressman was finally convicted, women's and children's rights advocates rejoiced not only because one girl finally found justice, but also because, we thought at the time, his conviction sent many important messages to Philippine society.

For starters, the fate that befell Jalosjos underscored that it is a crime and a sin to have sex with a child, this even if one has paid for his or her "services" (or especially if one has paid for sex, which is bad enough), or if one has supposedly secured the child's "consent" (a concept that is dubious at best).

Secondly, we had hoped that Jalosjos' excursion to Muntinlupa would show men, but especially powerful, influential and wealthy men, that not all their money and political clout could shield them from the law.

* * *

WHAT message would Jalosjos' untimely release, even before he has served a quarter of his double life sentence, send to society now?

Several come to mind: That it's all right to force, coerce, inveigle or buy a child into having sex with you. In which case all our children are now at risk, for what makes you think pedophiles and just plain randy influentials would stop at child prostitutes or children of the poor?

For another, that, as respondents in a TV news survey assert, there is really a two-tiered justice system at work in our land: justice for the rich, and justice for the poor. And the rich, no matter the crime—shooting the suspected mistress of your husband, shooting your battered wife in the abdomen, or raping a child—can and do get away with murder or rape.

And finally, that the rich and the powerful will always stick by their own kind. While so quick and careless to condemn humble public servants or bureaucrats for the slightest infraction or slight, our members of Congress, for instance, choose to take their own sweet time repudiating a friend, especially if he or his family continues to wield power in his locality.

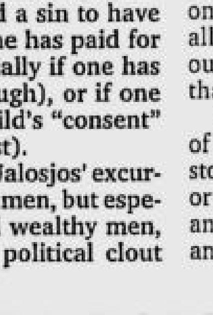
On New Year's Eve, our extended family played host once again to the young women and girls from the Nazareth and Bethany Growth Centers, both managed by Sr. Sol Perpinan's Third World Movement against the Exploitation of Women, on their annual Christmas caroling drive.

Even if by now my siblings and their spouses know the girls are either former sex workers or are survivors of sexual and physical abuse, our talk after their departure centered once more on how astonishingly young and innocent they all looked. And we all involuntarily looked at our own daughters, saying a silent prayer of thanks.

Maybe that's what we should all do in the wake of this latest Jalosjos scandal. But we shouldn't stop at thanking God for sparing our daughters, or the girls we know. We should all be roused to anger and indignation and action, that his friends and sponsors would feel our wrath.

The first Filipino novel

LOOKING BACK



Ambeth R. Ocampo

SOMETIME in the early 1990s, as a monk with a lot of time on my hands, I decided to try my hand at translating Pedro Paterno's "Pacto de Biyak-na-Bato" (first published in 1910). At the time, I was inspired by the example of medieval Benedictine monks who spent their time praying and, of course, copying, translating and editing manuscript materials that made monasteries beacons of light in the so-called "Dark Ages." My Latin was bad and my Greek non-existent, so I dashed my abbot's hopes that I would do erudite commentaries on the homilies of Bernard of Clairvaux or some other obscure monastic writer. My spoken Spanish has always been bad, but I'd like to think I know enough of it to make sense of written text, so Paterno seemed the easiest to translate.

Initially my list even included some 19th-century French travel accounts of the Philippines, but all that has since been abandoned. After completing a translation of "Pact of Biyak-na-Bato," I was informed that the whole book had already been translated by the National Historical Institute, so I gave up on yet another of the career paths available to me.

While I gave up on translating Paterno, I continually felt the need to have this work see print, if only to provide an insider's look into this controversial event in Philippine history. While one should read the work with caution, it still remains a primary source on the events leading to the truce of Biyak-na-Bato that ended with Emilio Aguinaldo and his men postponing the Revolution and leaving for exile in Hong Kong in December 1897. My appointment to the National Historical Institute in 2001 gave me an opportunity to suggest to Dr. Augusto de Viana of the research and publications division that we re-issue not only Paterno's "Biyak-na-Bato" but also his landmark novel "Ninay" because I had photocopies of the Tagalog and English translations on file.

Finally, the book is now available from the NHI on T.M. Kalaw Street, Manila. It's a double-billing as old moviegoers would say: "Pacto de Biyak-na-Bato" translated by the Institute, and "Ninay" translated by a certain E.F. Du Fresne, encoded from the book published in Manila in 1907 and dedicated to Mrs. William Howard Taft.

Now that is what we would call today *sipsip*. Remember Paterno was one of the greatest *balimbings* in history (perhaps he was the original *balimbing* in Philippine political history). He was first on the Spanish side, then when the declaration of independence was made in 1898, he wormed his way to power and became president of the Malolos Congress in 1899, then sensing the change in political winds after the establishment of the American colonial government, he became a member of the First Philippine Assembly.

Pedro Alejandro Paterno was born on Feb. 27, 1858 in Santa Cruz, Manila. If you look at the list of works printed in some of his books, he seems to have published a lot especially on Philippine history that have since been discredited as long-winded flights of fancy.

So why are these works being published by the institute? Well, Jose Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere" (1887) may be the great Philippine novel but contrary to popular belief it certainly was not the first. "Ninay" holds the distinction of being the first Filipino novel. It is also to be noted that Paterno's slim volume "Sampaguitas y poesias varias" (Madrid, 1880) is also supposed to be the first Filipino collection of poems. Since I am not a literary critic and I do not read novels and poetry for work or pleasure, I will not attempt an opinion on the literary merits these works may have or not.

Paterno is often remembered as a man with a moustache, wearing a black coat with tails complete with a sash and medals because he was decorated with the Grand Cross of Isabel by the Spanish government. He was elected president of the Malolos Congress, and after some political intrigue, succeeded Apolinario Mabini in Emilio Aguinaldo's Cabinet. In 1907 he was elected to the Philippine Assembly. He was founder of a handful of newspapers at the turn of the last century. He died on March 11, 1911.

He may not be the most inspiring person in Philippine history but he is worth reading since he claimed descent from pre-colonial Tagalog nobility and claimed to be the "Prince of Luzon." So on the cover of the present book, we have Paterno wearing a strange costume and carrying a scepter with ostrich feathers.

"Pacto de Biyak na Bato" is engaging because he gives short descriptions or makes references to many of the revolutionaries we now revere as heroes: Gregorio del Pilar, Emilio Aguinaldo, Mamerto Natividad, Mariano Llanera, etc. Often overlooked are some side stories like his going to the mountain of Susong Dalaga to consult an oracle. She was a 30-year-old woman who communicated with the spirit of Jose Rizal through a three-legged round table that would rise and fall. Rizal, or whoever it was they were communicating with, knocked on the table top to signify simple answers to their questions. When asked how they could serve the country, she answered, "...the celestial paternal rose of your country shall be the ones to suggest the dawn of liberty."

On that cryptic message, we leave the readers to make their own conclusions. This also explains why I suggested that we label these works "two works of fiction by Pedro Paterno," but again I leave the readers to form their own conclusions.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Acts of God

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

HAVE you noticed how insurance policies often include a disclaimer, limiting payments in cases of "acts of God"? The term is used to refer to natural disasters, an implicit acknowledgement that some events are beyond human control.

There's more to these "acts of God" than insurance coverage. As humans, we are always trying to understand why such events occur, especially when there's widespread suffering and death involved. We often turn to our religious leaders for explanations and they, in turn, will offer theodicies, attempts to explain the co-existence of God and evil. It's not easy doing this, especially in religions like Christianity, where God is supposed to be omnipotent and loving. If God is all powerful, why would He allow evil?

Beyond the theological debates, there are also lay theodicies, coming from religious leaders as well as experiences of families and friends. It's important to listen to what people are saying, and where they pick up their explanations, because it helps us to understand how people cope with adversity—whether catastrophic personal illnesses or something like the tsunami—and how we might want to tap into more positive aspects of these belief systems.

Divine retribution?

All over the world, there's a strong tendency to look at illnesses and natural disasters as divine retribution or, in Tagalog, *gaba*.

One newscast the other night featured a Sri Lankan Catholic priest who said the tsunami was God's way of telling us to "change our ways." And last December, a friend told me that shortly after the destructive typhoons, a Catholic priest delivered a homily in his parish in Quezon City where he warned the congregation that the typhoons were God's way of punishing politicians, specifically in Nueva Vizcaya and Aurora, for having supported family planning and a reproductive health bill in Congress.

My friend was understandably upset, and I can share his dismay, especially because the sermon played with facts. The most deaths occurred in Quezon, which was not mentioned, while Nueva Vizcaya, while hit hard, had a very low toll of lives. Now even if the typhoon had killed thousands in Nueva Vizcaya, we would have to ask, is God so displeased with family planning and reproductive health that He (or She) would send typhoons to destroy lives and property? Then, too, if this God so abhors family planning, then why were so many children killed? What happens to the politicians and the doctors and millions of people who practice and support family planning?

With the tsunami, one could ask, too, what kind of God would again kill so many children to express displeasure? Some Christian fundamentalists might then refer us to the Old Testament story of God slaughtering the eldest born of Egyptians to pressure them to let Moses and the Jews leave.

We need to question this view of a wrathful and partisan God. The tsunami struck a prison in Sri Lanka, allowing its inmates to escape. Was God on the inmates' side? The tsunami struck the hardest in the province of Banda Aceh, where there is a very active secessionist rebellion. Was God punishing the rebels?

My main gripe against these "God's punishment" interpretations is that they are often used to impose certain beliefs, about "us" the good and about "them" the evil, "them" being anyone who doesn't agree with us. These "explanations" are manipulative, shamelessly capitalizing on people's fear and suffering.

Trials

I suspect that many Filipinos tend to hold a dualistic view involving forces of good and of evil. On one hand, you have Satan, even human beings who have pacts with the devil, who cause disasters, misfortune, suffering. On the other hand, you have God and, for Catholics, the Virgin Mary and the saints. The world is a battleground for good and evil, and our hope lies in appealing to the forces of good to vanquish evil.

The emphasis is not so much on the punitive than on getting God, Mary and the saints to act on our behalf, protecting us from or warding off evil. Folk Catholicism sees humans as so vulnerable that a whole arsenal has been developed against evil: prayers, novenas, holy pictures, holy water, scapulars, amulets, rosaries and, lately, feng shui and Taoist charms thrown in for good measure.

If despite that arsenal calamities strike, one after another, friends will console us by saying that like Job in the Old Testament, God is testing our faith. Keep praying, we are told, and it will all pass, leaving us stronger. Such theodicies have also been criticized by theologians themselves in the way they explain evil by citing ultimate good in another life.

Catholic theologian Terrence Tilley, writing in "The New Dictionary of Theology," offers us useful advice: "The problem of evil is often treated as an invitation to theological debate. But when the endlessness of philosophers' debates reveals the hollowness of human explanations, something more remains. In solidarity, people can enable each other to face evil of every kind without denying its reality."

Tilley emphasizes that overcoming evil is not just a matter of helping its victims but of confessing to our own sins, including the times we fail to do good. We actually have a popular saying around this, "*Nasa Diyos ang awa, nasa tao ang gawa.*" It is up to God to be merciful; it is up to us humans to do what we can.

Morality

A secular alternative to the idea of "acts of God" is to look at illnesses, tsunamis, typhoons and similar disasters as natural phenomena that strike more or less randomly. Instead of gloating over who has been "punished," we instead search for explanations from the natural and physical sciences, with the hope that in the future, some of these disasters can be prevented, or how we might reduce the adverse impact if they do happen.

To be secular is not to throw out morality. Ultimately, we do concern ourselves with human "evil" or frailties. We look at how unhealthy lifestyles contribute to illnesses, for example, although note that religion may have its own labels for these behaviors, like gluttony or lust. We recognize, too, social "sins" such as the destruction of the environment that sets off floods, or in the aftermath of natural disasters such as what we're seeing now after the tsunami, the scams, the looting, the gang-rapes, the kidnapping and trafficking of orphans.

Unicef had a full-page ad in yesterday's INQUIRER naming Real, Quezon, Dingalan, Aurora and several places in India, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka hit by the tsunami. It goes on to appeal for help, especially for many children that are at risk from disease and from human vultures. Unicef notes: "Nature makes no distinctions. Neither should we."

It's a message that reminds us that we can be moral, that we can counter evil, without clinging to a belief in a vengeful and destructive God.

Democracy in action

LET me thank the INQUIRER for running a story on what we, Villahanons (townspeople of Villareal, Samar), are doing with a long neglected public road, whose upgrade and maintenance are the responsibility of the provincial government of Samar. (PDI, 1/1/05)

If I am not mistaken, this is the first time in the history of the Philippines that townspeople are taking the initiative of repairing and maintaining a public road—whose cost could run into millions. The dynamics of this extraordinary enterprise touches a multitude of leaders, personalities and groups.

First, there is the Villareal Association of Metro Manila, which broached the idea to Mayor Boy Latorre in a fiesta in Manila. The mayor was fascinated by the idea, perhaps because he has graduated from being a typical employee of the detestable Bureau of Customs. Moreover, it seems he has imbibed a great deal of civic and social consciousness by virtue of his friendship and association with some progressive activists.

Secondly, the Villahanons are not exactly the Juan Tamad, opportunistic, dole-hungry, dishonorable Samarnons. Villareal used to have the most number of college graduates in Samar. It is reputed to have given many of its sons to the priesthood. The abducted Redemptorist, Fr. Rudy Romano, was a Villahanon. His martyrdom paralyzed the dictatorship, inviting waves of concern from all over the world, including the European countries, the US Senate and the Republic of Ireland.

Thirdly, many Villahanons have given their lives and their talents to "progressive" movements. The logic of a collective action is part of our psychology.

Fourthly, we are fed up with the corruption, the incompetence and the lack of concern of provincial and national officials.

Finally, in the entire island of Samar, the Villahanons are the most Internet-conscious group of people. It is the only town in Samar which can boast of three websites. Because of our connection to each other in the Internet, and our pride in what we are doing, we are sending e-mail after e-mail, transmitting text messages after text messages to each other so that we can mobilize ourselves to support this once-in-a-century public enterprise.

We are hoping that the powerful people in Imperial Manila recognize what we, Villahanons, are doing. This can be a possible model for partnership between the people of a town and the various levels of government and their officials, from the province to the Senate, to Malacañang.

Villahanons take great honor and pride in knowing that even our young children, schoolgirls in the elementary grades, are helping in the Bayanihan Road Project. Indeed, this is democracy in action. We are proud and honorable. But we know our limitations, too. And we are aware of the hundreds of thousands of dollars and billions of pesos of the people's money that have been looted by powerful people of the Philippines.

—CESAR TORRES,
cesar1185@aol.com

Coco farmers, not gov't, rightful owners of coco funds

THE COCONUT farmers are thankful that the Sandiganbayan has finally rendered a decision—specifically on the 27-percent San Miguel Corp. shares—favorable to them. After waiting and advocating for years for the return of the coco levy funds to their rightful owners, we are finally winning cases in the courts of justice. But winning the cases is just the beginning of yet another struggle of the coco farmers to actually benefit from the said funds. The coco farmers cannot afford to let their guards down.

What some people in government are saying about the coco levy funds is very disappointing. We would like to remind them that the courts' decision stressed that "the government is holder in trust for all coconut farmers." The ultimate beneficiaries of the coco levy funds are the 3.4 million coco farmers and farmworkers, whom the government can help by using the funds to develop the coconut industry. They should read the Dec. 14, 2001 Supreme Court decision and the succeeding Sandiganbayan decisions which stressed that the coco levy funds were collected for a specific purpose and should, therefore, be used for that purpose.

The government should now work hand in hand with the coconut farmers to rehabilitate the industry. But they should also be relentless in their pursuit for the full return of the coco levy funds, specifically the remaining 20-percent SMC shares in the name of Eduardo Cojuangco's dummy corporations.

—JOEY T. FAUSTINO,
executive director,
Coconut Industry Reform
Movement Inc.,
84 Masikap Ext.,
Barangay Central, Diliman, QC

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Just, sustainable mining industry

THE COMMENTARY by John J. Carroll, S.J. (PDI, 12/12/04)—warning of "more tragedies in the making," especially now that the Supreme Court has upheld the Philippine Mining Act of 1995—gave a grim picture of mining. But, apparently, it is a picture that failed to consider what precisely the laws he criticized—the Mining Act and its implementing rules and regulations (IRR)—aim to address.

A closer scrutiny of these laws, and perhaps, an open mind, would show that the answers to all our doubts about mining in the Philippines have long been laid on our table.

The Mining Act and its IRR contain environmental and social nets (absent in previous mining laws), which are considered as the most stringent in any standard today. They include established mechanisms—such as the Environmental Work Program, Environmental Protection and Enhancement Program, Contingent Liability and Rehabilitation Fund, Final Mine Rehabilitation/Decommissioning Plan, and the Social Development and Management Plan—ensuring, among others, that environmental conditions are sustained during and after "minelife"; and that communities are afforded their equitable share of the benefits of mining.

It must be noted that we have yet to receive any documented case of indigenous Filipinos physically displaced in exploration or mining areas. To us, this is a clear proof that the safeguards provided by the Mining Act to protect their rights are, indeed, working.

Indeed, the 1996 Marcopper incident is only one example of what can go wrong in mining. However, it should not be used to judge and determine the future of the industry. Marcopper was allowed to discharge tailings in Calancan Bay based on scientific knowledge existing at the time. While the technology used then may not be acceptable today, using the legacy of the past to block new mine development is unreasonable. It must be noted that our understanding of the environmental and social issues and the technology needed to minimize the various impacts of mining has grown exponentially in the last three decades.

We are aware that mining is seen differently by different people. However, whether you are an environmentalist, an ordinary citizen, a businessman, pro- or anti-mining, you need the products of mining. Society's continuing demand for mining products is reason enough for the industry to endure.

We are aware that the Supreme Court decision imposes upon us the tremendous responsibility of ensuring that the Mining Act is implemented toward our vision of a responsible and, eventually, sustainable local minerals industry that is both pro-people and pro-environment; a mining industry that can be a catalyst for development and—if we may emphasize—one that would help this government battle what is looming to be the worst tragedy of all—poverty.

—HORACIO C. RAMOS,
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MGB Compound, North Avenue,
Diliman, Quezon City

Warning

DEC. 26, 2004 was the day God dipped a finger into the ocean. And we saw how fragile our existence is. With the death toll from the earthquake-tsunami disaster running into hundreds of thousands and still counting, I really hope we—whether we are Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, etc.—can now fully appreciate the life God has given us. Certainly, God's wrath does not discriminate between religious beliefs, races, or social classes.

As a father of three, my heart goes out to the parents who lost their children in the tragedy. It has brought me a lot of pain seeing dead children, victims of the Dec. 26 tragedy, being piled up like trash. There can be no words to describe the anguish and melancholy these parents are experiencing. To those who lost their friends, brothers, sisters, wives and husbands, my sincerest sympathies.

After this tragedy, I hope and pray that humanity will renew itself and put more priority on the value of co-existence in our fragile planet. Let us not be consumed by our cheap biases and petty prejudices. Let us rather value and cherish human life and our planet. Let us not wait for God to be so frustrated with humanity, lest He dips again into our oceans, this time not just with His finger but with His arm.

—JUN GUERRERO,
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Matina, Davao City

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Baguio folk wear masks vs meningo

By Donna Demetillo
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—In this summer capital, it isn't service with a smile. It's service with a mask.

Health officials here zero in on service-related centers due to their vulnerability to meningococcemia, a fatal meningitis stain that has killed 24 people in the Cordillera.

Like, when you enter a bank, tellers will most likely entertain you with a mask.

Dr. Antonio Bautista, Department of Health-Cordillera spokesperson and chief of the medical surveillance team monitoring meningococcemia cases, said banks have also been instructed to have their tellers vaccinated.

This is because that although there are glass divisions between tellers and clients, people tend to peek through the hole to hear better, he said.

The advisory also goes for call centers. Clientlogic, a call center here, has been advised to eliminate double shifts so as to maintain employees' resistance.

The city is now on full alert drawing up measures to effectively contain the spread of the bacteria that infects the bloodstream which causes a variety of symptoms.

These are fever, stiff neck, convulsions, altered mental state, vomitting, coughing, sore throat and other forms of respiratory distress, and rashes usually in the arms and legs.

"Despite the cases, the disease is actually contained, and health authorities are on top of the situation," Bautista said. "It is not an epidemic. Baguio and Cordillera do not have a monopoly of meningococcemia."

City officials said serious efforts must be started to really clean public facilities like the market.

"The market should really be cleaned with or without meningococcemia," Vice Mayor Peter Rey Bautista said.

As part of the cleanup drive, illegal structures in the market would be torn down, he said.

He said the renewed spread of the disease started from a restaurant in the market that was converted into a karaoke bar.

The first targets of the campaign will be karaoke bars where microphones and shot glasses are passed around and fingers dip into bowls of *pulutan* (appetizers). This is to minimize risks of infection.

Bautista said cleaning up the market would not only prevent the spread of meningococcemia but other diseases as well.

There has been much ado whether or not to close the entire market. But officials see no immediate need for this since, they stress, it is not the place, and certainly not the food sold in the market, but the people who cause the spread of the disease.

From March to December last year, meningococcemia infected 42 people, mostly children, in Cordillera. In Baguio, 18 of 20 cases reported during the period have died.

But Bautista clarified it is not the entire city that is affected but only 20 barangays. Nearby La Trinidad in Benguet reported seven cases and three fatalities. Other areas in the Cordillera reported isolated cases.

Happy New Year!!!
VERY SOON

BAGUIO residents go about their normal routine, except with masks on their faces to protect them from meningococcemia. TOOTS SOBERANO

NO TSUNAMI CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Natividad Santos, 67, a victim of paralysis, gazes at the sea in Hundred Islands in Pangasinan. The tourist destination is being promoted by former President Fidel Ramos and his nephew, Alaminos Mayor Hernani Braganza who has invited ambassadors and dignitaries to the place on Saturday.

Quake revives fear of Mindanao tsunami

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A mild earthquake was felt here early yesterday.

Alan Rommel Labayog, officer in charge of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology office in Western Mindanao, said the magnitude 4.3 quake occurred at 8:25 a.m.

Labayog said the tremor's epicenter was traced 130 kilometers southeast of Jolo, Sulu.

He said it was generated from the Moro Gulf in the eastern area of the Cotabato Trench at a depth of 33 kilometers.

The Cotabato Trench generated the 1976 tsunami in Mindanao that killed at least 8,000 people and flattened hundreds of structures, including bridges.

Atilano Ade, the local chief of the Office of Civil Defense, told the INQUIRER that they discovered the problem in the city's soil foundation, "when we conducted the study on microtremor sometime in 2002."

"We found out that there is no problem in the building construction, the problem lies in the foundation," Ade said.

Labayog said Zamboanga City's foundation is made up of clay, sand and silt, which run to as deep as 22 meters from the surface.

Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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Traders say cancellation of import permits unconstitutional, sue SBMA

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—Calling the recent suspension of the issuance of import permits as unconstitutional, several vehicle importers inside this freeport filed a writ of mandamus on Tuesday against officials of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority before a regional trial court in Olongapo City.

In a seven-page petition, officials and members of the Motor Vehicle Importers Association of Subic Bay Freeport Inc. (MVIA) asked the Olongapo Court to compel SBMA officials to desist from violating the legal rights of investors here.

"SBMA and its officials have violated our clear legal rights as legitimate investors by their continued, unreasonable and unlawful refusal to act on our request to be issued import permits," MVIA president Eduardo Barretto said.

Barretto said their move was aimed at "helping us resolve the ongoing situation we were all facing."

"Our businesses have been jeopardized, to say the least and the employment and livelihood of thousands of people remain in peril," he said.

But SBMA Administrator Alfredo Antonio, the main respondent, said he has yet to receive a copy of the class suit.

"We are not aware of nor have we received any mandamus from the court. Should we receive one, we shall weigh the matter of the situation and do what is best for the interest of the SBMA and follow legal procedures," Antonio said in a statement.

Other vehicle importers claimed SBMA officials' inaction over their plea had "violated the very nature of a freeport," including the implementing rules and policies of Republic Act 7227 which created the SBMA.

"We have been treated unfairly, at worse, like criminals here. There's no other recourse but for us to seek legal action against the newly appointed officials of SBMA," Barretto said.

In a statement, MVIA officials said they are now facing "grim" prospects of closing down their shops and laying off thousands of their employees due to the suspension order.

"The effects (of the suspension order) on our otherwise legitimate conduct of business are unprecedented. We are on the verge of closing down our respective business enterprises," the statement said.

They said it has been four months now since the SBMA stopped the issuance of import permits.

"SBMA's latest move is not only unconstitutional but is an affront to free trade policy in the Philippines," the investors said.

"We hope that this situation will be resolved at the soonest time possible. Our industry has suffered gravely over the past years. Our operations are not only legitimate but have been upheld by law for a number of instances and we remain steadfast in our quest for justice and equal opportunity," they said.

Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Probe of fake court order set

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—A court employee and a lawyer are under investigation for faking a court decision and forging the signature of a judge.

Bacolod Regional Trial Court Executive Judge Pepito Gellada, however, declined to identify the employee and the lawyer pending results of the investigation.

But he told the INQUIRER that the Supreme Court was already informed of the investigation being conducted by his office.

"If the evidence warrants, charges of falsification of public documents can be filed against the two," he said.

The court employee would also be held administratively liable for acts of dishonesty while the lawyer could face disbarment proceedings, he added.

Gellada said the investigation stemmed from the complaint of forgery filed by RTC Judge Ray Alan Drilon and his clerk of court, lawyer Corazon Romero.

He said the signatures of Drilon and Romero were forged on the fake court order that allowed the petitioner to correct an error in a birth certificate.

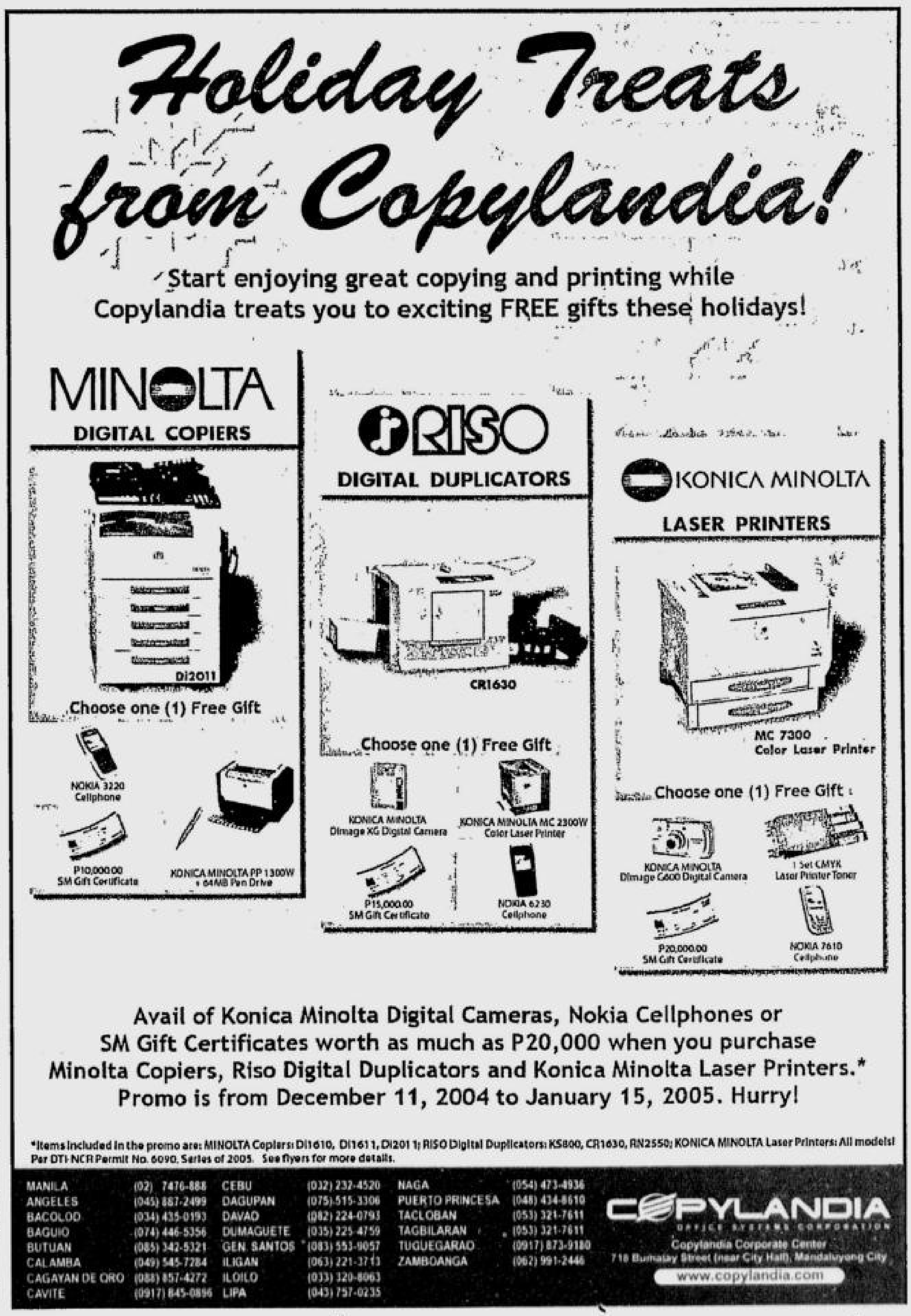
The lawyer, he added, was suspected to have manufactured the court ruling with the help of the court employee who was not from the office of Drilon.

According to Gellada, a graduate of a maritime school discovered that in his birth certificate, the letter F was placed in the blank for sex instead of M.

His mother was reportedly told that the error could be corrected by seeking a court order correcting it and she could get this quickly but for a fee.

Gellada said the mother made some payments and was given the needed ruling with the signature of Drilon. Gellada did not say how much the mother paid for the court document.

The mother brought the document to the local civil registrar.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Race to save 5 million people

From page A1

promises might not be honored.

As the conference ended, delegates issued a declaration pledging to work together to help the decimated countries recover and to set up a tsunami warning system to ensure that next time such a wave was generated, coastal residents would have time to flee to higher ground.

"This unprecedented devastation needs unprecedented global response in assisting the national governments to cope with such disaster," the declaration said.

The relief and reconstruction could take up to a decade, the leaders said.

Annan urged nations to channel US$1.7 billion of the funds to the United Nations for relief, including US$977 million for emergency aid.

"Whole communities have disappeared," Annan said. "Millions in Asia, Africa, and even in far away countries, are suffering unimaginable trauma and psychological wounds that will take a long time to heal. Families have been torn apart.

"The disaster was so brutal, so quick, and so far-reaching, that we are still struggling to comprehend it," Annan added, stressing the need for donor "pledges to be converted into cash quickly . . . It is a race against time."

A MOSQUE survives the destruction wrought by the killer waves in a district in Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh province in western Indonesia.

AP

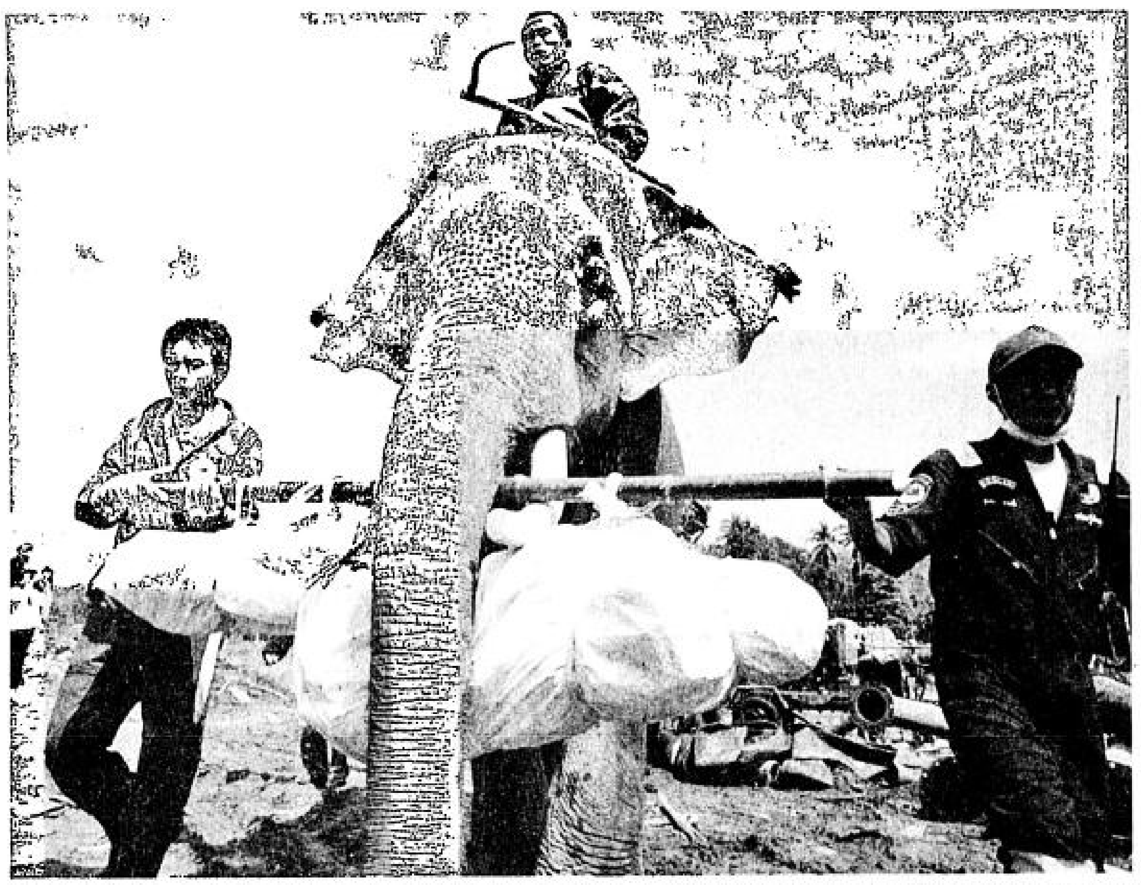
WHO warning

The UN chief said the number killed across Asia and Africa would likely exceed 150,000, but the exact figure would never be known. The World Health Organization warned the toll could double if aid doesn't reach survivors soon.

"Five million people have been severely affected by the tsunamis," said WHO Director General Dr. Lee Jong-wook. "We now estimate that as many as 150,000 people are at extreme risk, if a major disease outbreak in the affected areas occurs."

Doctors warned of a looming catastrophe from ever-more serious health crises—gangrenous wounds that require limb amputations, scores of children with diarrhea, pneumonia caused by exposure to dirty water.

In Indonesia's hard-hit Aceh province, dangerous infections were sneaking into superficial wounds, said the WHO's Dr. Ronald Waldman. Pneumonia has also emerged as a significant illness, caused by exposure to dirty water during the tsunami, he said.



NOTHING beats elephants as heavy lifters of tsunami victims in Phuket, Thailand. Officials had flown in at least 24 elephants to speed up the retrieval of bodies. They are better than four-wheel drive trucks and backhoes, according to officials.

REUTERS

Rotting corpses

Around Banda Aceh, aid workers, with masks covering their faces to ward off the stench of rotting corpses, were picking up bodies and dumping them in trucks to carry them to quickly dug mass graves. Many of the bodies are being buried without being identified or counted.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono described the calamity as "the most destructive natural disaster in living memory."

"Our response to this unprecedented catastrophe must be equally unprecedented," he said at the one-day summit, attended by leaders including Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and US Secretary of State Colin Powell.

A tsunami warning system—like the one already in place in the Pacific—should be established in the Indian Ocean as quickly as possible, the leaders agreed.

Japan planned to offer technical expertise to set up the warning system. The country has one of the world's most advanced networks of fiber-optic sensors, which can warn of deadly tsunami within two minutes of a quake.

"No longer must we leave ourselves so vulnerable and so exposed," Thai Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathaim said. "It is well-proven that 10 minutes advance warning can save hundreds of lives."

UN to take lead

In their closing declaration leaders called for the United Nations to take the lead in coordinating the relief effort.

Powell told delegates the United States would let the United Nations coordinate relief work. Soon after the tsunami struck, Washington said it and a few other countries would lead the aid effort.

Countries around the world have pledged almost US$4 billion in addition to sending troops and teams of medics to the stricken regions.

On the sidelines of the meeting, European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said the European Union would immediately donate euro100 million (US$132 million) for tsunami relief and look at setting up a euro1 billion (US$1.32 billion) loan for affected nations.

Barroso said he also would ask the European Parliament to approve another euro350 million (US$461 million) in aid for longer term reconstruction of devastated countries.

But there were fears much of the pledged money would not materialize.

Just over a year ago, donors promised Iran more than US$1 billion in relief after an earthquake killed 26,000 people there. Iranian officials say only US$17.5 million has been sent.

Tight security

Hundreds of heavily armed police and troops ringed the plush Jakarta conference center hosting the summit.

Security already is tight throughout Jakarta, where al-Qaida-linked terrorists have been blamed for bombing a hotel and the Australian Embassy recently, as well as the 2002 Bali attacks, which killed 202 people, mostly foreigners.

Defiance

In a final defiant paragraph to their declaration the leaders vowed to work together to rebuild.

"We believe that through concerted efforts, spurred by spirit of compassion and sacrifice and endurance, together we will prevail in overcoming this catastrophe," the statement said. *AP*

GMA offers to send more RP medics, engineers

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday offered to send more Filipino health workers and engineers to help rebuild shattered lives and communities across the tsunami-devastated countries in South and Southeast Asia.

In an emergency meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Jakarta, Ms Arroyo said the need of the moment was easing the pain and sufferings of the tsunami victims.

"(Filipino) forensic experts are in Thailand, our medical team arrived yesterday in Sri Lanka and another medical team is on its way to Aceh. We have many more health and engineering professionals volunteering to go where they are needed," Ms Arroyo said in her speech at the Jakarta summit.

"The Philippines is blessed with abundant human resources and our professionals, including those in the fields of health care and engineering are truly world-class," she said.

"More than our modest cash donations, our talented Filipino professionals have volunteered to make themselves available to assist both in the relief efforts as well as the important long-term rebuilding efforts," Ms Arroyo said.

"As recent recipients of global generosity shown us by the world community as we grappled in the aftermath of life-ending typhoons, the Philippines values the family of nations that aid each other in time of peril and need," Ms Arroyo said.

Ms Arroyo did not say how many additional teams the Philippines planned to send to the affected countries. Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, who was part of Ms Arroyo's entourage, said the Philippines was just making a "general statement" of its offer for now.

Conspiracy theorists pin tsunami on aliens, military

From page A1

aliens trying to correct the earth's "wobbly" rotation.

In bars and Internet chatrooms around the world questions are being asked, with knowing nods and winks, about who caused the submarine earthquake off Sumatra last Dec. 26, and why governments were so slow to act in the minutes and hours before tsunamis slammed into their shores, killing almost 150,000.

Questions, questions

"There's a lot more to this. Why is the US sending a warship? Why is a senior commander who was in Iraq going there?" whispered designer Mark Tyler, drinking a pint of beer at a bar in Hong Kong's Wan Chai district.

"This happened exactly a year after Bam," said Tyler, referring to the earthquake in Iran which killed 30,000 on Dec. 26, 2003.

"Is that a coincidence? And there was no previous seismic activity recorded in Sumatra before the quake, which is very strange," he said, nodding somberly.

After every globally shocking event—from the bombing of Pearl Harbor to the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the death of Princess Diana and the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States—conspiracy theorists emerge with their own sinister take on events.

This time the Indian and US military are in the frame.

Among the more common suggestions is that eco-weapons which can trigger earthquakes and volcanoes remotely through the use of electromagnetic waves were being tested. More outlandish theories include one that aliens caused the earthquake to try and correct the "wobbly rotation of the earth."

Scientists explain

Scientists give such theories short shrift.

"This was a natural disaster," said Dr. Bart Bautisda, chief science research specialist at Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, debunking the idea that an "eco-weapon" could be used to cause an earthquake or such large-scale tsunamis.

"You would need a very huge amount of energy. It's impossible. A billion tons could not do it," Bautisda said.

He said wave activity might be able to be triggered very close to the scene of a giant explosion, but the effect would be a tiny fraction of the tsunamis which travelled thousands of kilometers at the speed of a jet after tectonic plates shifted off Sumatra.

"It's possible to cause vibration, but not sufficient to cause disruption," he said.

"We can tell the difference between an artificial explosion and an earthquake," Bautisda said. "The mechanisms are different."

Internet abuzz

Scientific evidence, however, cuts little ice with many conspiracy theorists.

The Internet—which has proved invaluable in dealing with the disaster by aiding rescues, providing witness accounts from bloggers and allowing grieving relatives to comfort each other through chatrooms—is abuzz with more sinister explanations.

The Free Internet Press, which claims to offer "uncensored news for real people," has an article saying the US military and the US Department of State received advanced warning of the tsunami, but did little to warn Asian countries.

America's Navy base on the Indian Ocean jungle atoll of Diego Garcia was notified and escaped unscathed, it said, asking "why were fishermen in India, Sri Lanka and Thailand not provided with the same warnings?

US mum

"Why did the US state department remain mum on the existence of an impending catastrophe?" author Michel Chossudovsky pondered.

"Probably because fishermen in India, Sri Lanka and Thailand don't have multimillion-dollar communications equipment handy," said one respondent as readers posted angry replies.

"Maybe rescuers will find Elvis and the gunman form the grassy knoll," jibed another, referring to those who believe Elvis Presley is still alive and that former US President Kennedy was shot by someone other than Lee Harvey Oswald.

Failure to act

The governments of countries from Australia to Thailand stand accused of deliberately failing to act on warnings of the impending earthquake or the tsunamis it unleashed around Asia.

In Bangkok, however, a quake expert at Thailand's beleaguered meteorology bureau has shot back at critics, saying the agency never could have predicted the tsunami which claimed more than 5,000 lives in the kingdom.

Burin Vejbanterg, who was the only department expert in the bureau when the deadly waves struck, argued that with current equipment and expertise there was no way the tsunami could have been predicted, said the Nation newspaper.

"Our bureau cannot predict earthquakes, nor can it predict tsunamis. We can only measure the earthquakes' magnitude and epicenter," Burin told the daily.

"The idea of a tsunami didn't even cross my mind at that time because it has never happened before in the Indian Ocean," he said, adding "The Tsunami Alert Center (in Hawaii) put Thailand at zero risk of tidal waves."

The Nation said the center had warned Thailand about one hour before the waves struck that there could be a tsunami near the quake epicenter, about 500 km from the badly hit Thai resort island of Phuket.

Burin said phone lines had been ringing non-stop that morning with people reporting tremors. He had sought permission to make a public announcement on the quake but by then it was too late.

"When we realized what had happened, the waves were already smashing the coast," he said.

Tragic coincidence

The Thai government announced last week it would set up an inquiry into why the public was not alerted to the waves triggered by a massive earthquake off Indonesia.

The India Daily's website joined the conspiracy theorists noting, "it seems the whole world decided to fail to do anything together at the same time. Are we missing something?

"Can it be that all the government agencies knew what was happening but were told not to do anything? Who told them? Or is this just a tragic coincidence?" wrote Sudhir Chadda, a correspondent.

"Recent alien contacts have been reported with the South Asian Governments especially India. UFO sightings have been rampant over the region affected," Chadda wrote.

Humans did it

"Some in Nicobar Island say that it was an experiment conducted by the alien extra-terrestrial entities to correct the wobbly rotation of the earth. And some of the Indian scientists are actually seeing that wobbly rotation of the earth has been corrected since the massive underwater earthquake and Tsunami."

In Hong Kong, Tyler laughed at the alien idea, but remained convinced humans had a hand in this disaster. "Wait and see. There will be a lot more to come out," he said. *AFP*

New witness in Nida slay 'b-day gift' to mom–Kaye

By Luige A. del Puerto

ON WHAT would have been the late Nida Blanca's 69th birthday, her daughter Katherine "Kaye" Torres said the surfacing of a key witness in the murder of the actress was not just a "beautiful birthday gift" but also a sign of the "wrath of God" against her killers.

"It's not just a birthday gift. That would be too shallow. It's the wrath of God—or at least the start of it," Torres said from the Loyola Memorial Center in Marikina City yesterday where family, friends and fans gathered before the late actress' tomb to mark the event.

"I've been praying and asking Mom to let me feel that this is it—for her to tell me to be ready, be strong," she told reporters.

She laughed heartily at times, but remained composed, even when she talked about her stepfather Rod Strunk, a primary suspect in Blanca's murder, who is now in California.

"I hope he does not just die somewhere. I hope he does not commit suicide—because that would be too easy," she said tersely.

"I want him to face justice here," Torres said.

Extradition request

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday that the Department of Justice (DOJ) was gathering the records of the case in preparation for a second extradition request against Strunk, adding that he hoped Dalandas' testimony would address concerns the US court raised when it dismissed the first extradition petition against Strunk.

California Judge Gregory Hollows had denied the government's first extradition request in November 2003 because of "conflicting and inconsistent evidence" submitted against Strunk, an American citizen.

Dalandas, her husband and 3-month-old baby are now under the DOJ's Witness Protection Group.

In her sworn statement, Dalandas said she saw how Strunk, Medel and another man beat up Blanca in the parking lot on the sixth floor of the Atlanta building in San Juan.

The DOJ is looking at another witness, also a woman, to corroborate Dalandas' testimony. At the very least, this possible witness could confirm Dalandas' presence in the area at the time of the murder, it said.

Torres has also reserved kind words for government agencies working on the case, although she said she "could not give the National Bureau of Investigation all the credit" for the recent development. This was a far cry from the scathing criticisms she delivered against the bureau last year for "bungling" her mother's case.

But Torres understands that despite Dalandas' testimony, the case still has a long way to go, particularly on the issue of Strunk's extradition to the Philippines. "But the important thing is that there is a significant development. Even if justice is slow, something is happening to the case," she said.

"What is very significant here is that Angie (Dalandas) placed Rod Strunk, Mike Martinez and Philip Medel at the crime scene," she added.

"I could actually visualize the whole thing because of the details," Torres said. "The more I read her statement, the more I see that she is telling the truth."

Prayer

Torres said her prayer now is that Dalandas would not break down during the trial, when she takes the witness stand. "But if you're speaking the truth, you won't be shaken. It's not like when you are lying or just memorizing lines," she said.

On Blanca's tomb was a spray of white roses and a bougainvillea plant.

Every now and then, a fan would drop by to light a candle or to say a prayer, like Sonnie Mangalindan who brought an orange candle all the way from Mindoro for her "idol."

Torres disclosed that her "real birthday gift" to her mother was waking up early yesterday.

"God knows I'm not a morning person. My mom knows that," she told the INQUIRER, laughing. "I woke up early for her today."

Gonzalez said that the NBI would conduct a reenactment of Blanca's murder at 9 a.m. today at the Atlanta Center Building in San Juan.

The building administrator did not allow authorities to enter the premises earlier, but eventually relented, although with limited media presence. *With Philip C. Tubeza*

Dorothy Jones
A.K.A.
NIDA BLANCA
JAN. 6 1936
NOV. 7 2001

KAYE Torres, the daughter of Nida Blanca, lights a candle at the grave of the murdered actress during a visit yesterday.
JOAN BONDOC

Staggered hours may be extended –MMDA

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) is set to meet with Metro Manila mayors and representatives from the business and labor sector next week to discuss the possible extension of the Staggered Working Time (SWT) scheme.

"We observed that travel time on Edsa improved by 40 to 50 percent because of the scheme," MMDA General Manager Robert Nacianceno said.

Nacianceno said they would ask for feedback from the concerned sectors regarding the scheme's effectiveness.

"We will just present the information. The scheme's result will speak for itself, and this would be the basis if the sectors would still want the extension," he added.

The majority of Metro Manila's local government units including the cities of Malabon, Valenzuela, Las Piñas, Parañaque, Marikina, Navotas, Manila, Pasay and Quezon City, and the municipality of Pateros abided by the SWT.

However, the cities of Makati, Mandaluyong and Muntinlupa, and the municipality of Taguig chose not to implement the scheme.

Implemented from Dec. 15 to Jan. 6, the SWT was conceived to ease the worsening traffic brought about by the holiday season, according to MMDA officials.

Under the SWT, government workers were required to work from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Private employees, on the other hand, were asked to report from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Women's prison offers labor pool

By Ruth L. Navarra

EXPLOITATION or a chance to help inmates get back on their feet?

Correctional Institution for Women (CIW) Superintendent Rachel Ruelo yesterday said that the inmates in CIW could be tapped for cheap manpower, raising questions on prison labor and reform.

"Private corporations could hire the inmates to produce products for them," Ruelo said. She added that since they are inside the prison, corporations need not worry about union problems.

"The women here are very creative. You only show them how to do something once, and soon they begin to create their own designs," said Ruelo.

CIW has several livelihood programs such as candle-making, weaving, agriculture and poultry offered to the inmates. Ruelo, however, prefers the term "rehabilitation" to livelihood.

Ruelo said that they regularly invite resource persons who could teach the inmates jobs that they could do on their own once they have served time. In fact, they have already scheduled a workshop to be handled by a popular beauty expert who would teach detainees to cut hair using the latest hairstyle trends.

"Activities like this give the inmates something to look forward to once they leave prison," said Ruelo.

Rodelyn Nava, an inmate in charge of a parlor inside CIW, said that the money she earns from cutting hair allows her to buy personal necessities like shampoo, soap and toothpaste.

Mandaluyong spruces up for 2005

MANDALUYONG City has joined hands with the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) to develop several barangays along Pasig River in line with its clean and green beautification program.

Informal settlers living along the long river bank stretch have already been relocated to areas where their homes stand at least 10 meters from the waterway.

"The informal settlers contribute to the filth of the river because they would throw their garbage into the river instead of wait for the garbage collector," said Armand Comandao, city planning and development coordinator.

Part of the development includes pathways along the river, lighting fixtures, and a gazebo cum playground.

The city has also embarked on a plan to develop areas for people with little or no money to spend for leisure.

Parks in Barangays Ilaya, Vergara and Buwayang Bato have been completed last year, with another on Barangay Mabini-J. Rizal underway.

A new ferry station in Barangay Hulo is also in the works.
Ruth L. Navarra

Search for RP's good cops opens

AIMING to change the bad image of the police, a search has been launched for the Country's Outstanding Policemen in Service (COPS).

Dr. Wilson Pamintuan, of the Rotary Club of New Manila East (RCNME), said the search would seek to recognize law enforcers who perform well and highlight the cooperation between them and the community.

The search is a project of the RCNME and the Metrobank Foundation Inc.

"We're looking for policemen who will serve as models, and hopefully bring back public confidence [in] and respect [for] the police force," Pamintuan told the INQUIRER.

The search is open to all policemen who have been in the service for at least seven years. *Tina G. Santos*

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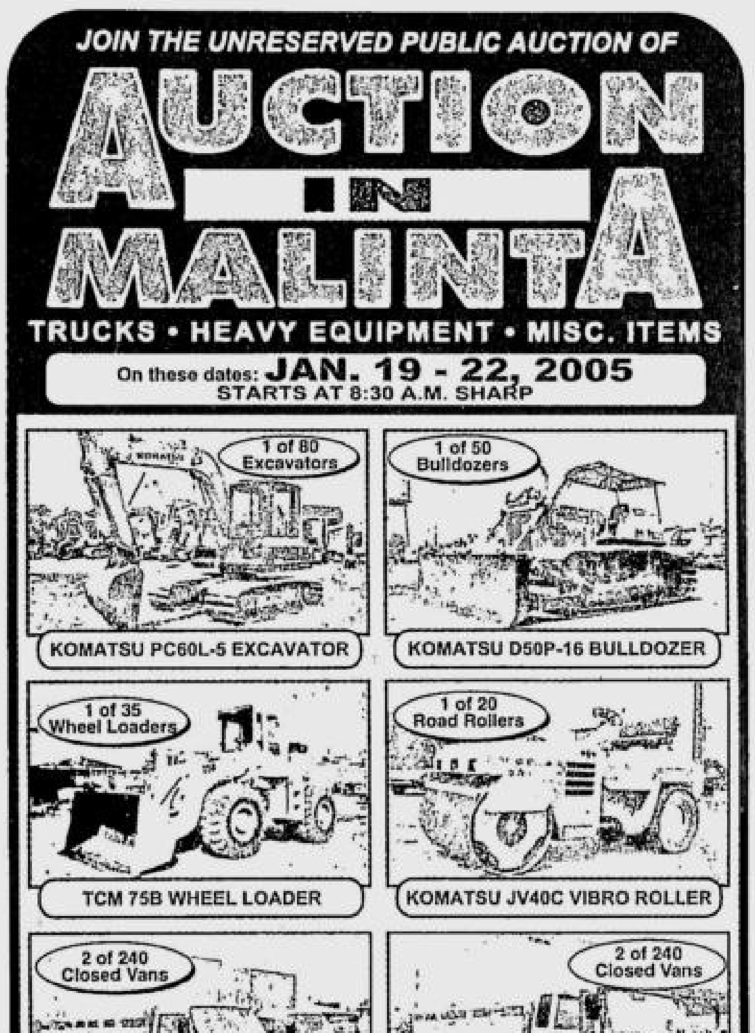
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Gas tank explodes inside SSS office

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE BALL of flame did little damage. But the stampede it caused seriously injured four and hurt scores of other people.

The stampede took place at the office of the Social Security System in Caloocan City when a leaky acetylene hose burst into flames late yesterday morning.

"I thought the building would go up in flames," Alma Murillo, 31, told the INQUIRER, speaking in Filipino.

Murillo was holding her year-old son inside the SSS office when the mad scramble occurred at about 11 a.m.

Technicians from the Cyclic Industrial Corp. were installing a new air-conditioner on the first floor of the SSS building on Edsa while about a hundred people were waiting inside to process their papers.

When technicians opened an acetylene tank to do some welding, a rubber pipe burst with a loud bang, sending out highly flammable gas. Then, there was a big ball of fire.

SSS patrons panicked. Many scrambled for the main entrance but one of its two glass doors was reportedly locked.

Some rushed up a flight of stairs to the second floor.

In the rush to flee from the fire, people pushed and elbowed their way out of the building.

Some stumbled and were trampled upon.

One of the glass doors broke and four people suffered cuts, including Aureliano Marcos, 74.

Murillo said she stayed put, afraid that her son would be crushed in the stampede.

"We urged them not to panic but they still ran for the exit," receiving clerk Gilbert Realo, 32, said.

Technicians quickly put out the flames.

Technician Joel Goltiano, 27, said he used a fire extinguisher that they had brought.

SPO2 Antonio Paras said that aside from the two-foot-high tank where the gas leaked, there were three other bigger tanks beside it when the incident happened.

If the fire had persisted, all four tanks could have exploded, Paras said.

The tanks were at the back of several rows of seats provided for people transacting with the SSS office.

Arvin Zapanta, 22, another technician, told the INQUIRER that the small acetylene tank functioned normally the first time they used it that same morning.

Aside from Marcos, Winifreda Morales, 54; Felisa Mercado, 64, and Magenda Mahilum, 19, were also brought to the nearby Manila Central University Hospital.

More than 10 persons, who sustained wounds and bruises, were treated by SSS resident doctor Corazon Bondoc.

The branch promised to shoulder the hospital bills of those hurt in the stampede.

About 4,000 people transact at the office every day, employees said.

Judge begs off from realty tax hike case

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE CASE against the recent increase in real estate taxes in Manila hit a snag early in the process.

The Manila judge tasked to handle the civil suit filed by Manila Rep. Jaime Lopez, his nephew Manuel and lawyer Reynaldo Aralar inhibited herself from hearing the complaint.

Judge Aida Rangel-Roque of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 25 granted a motion for her inhibition filed by the city government.

City Hall lawyers sought the transfer of the case from Roque's sala after the judge said in open court that she owned property in Manila. She was thus also bound to pay real property taxes, the issue in question.

The group of Lopez filed the case against Mayor Lito Atienza and the City Treasurer's Office, questioning the recent tax adjustment that would raise tax dues of Manila's real property owners.

Lopez is asking the court to nullify as unconstitutional the tax adjustment, which doubled the tax assessment value of real property resulting in higher tax dues.

The suit said the adjustment, which came through an ordinance approved last year, was illegal and ill-timed as it raised tax dues just as the city struggled with a gloomy economy.

At the hearing of the case on Wednesday, Branch Clerk of Court Minerva Bautista said that Roque acknowledged that she and her relatives owned property in Manila.

"She said people might think that her being a property owner would affect any decision she might make on the case. So she asked the parties if it was okay for her to proceed," said Bautista.

Atienza's lawyers then responded with a motion to inhibit Roque from the case, which will now be raffled off to another court.

'Meningo' case stays buried in Malabon

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE SUSPECTED case of meningococcemia in Malabon City will remain to be suspect, at least for now.

The City Health Office has dropped suggestions to exhume the remains of the 6-month-old boy believed to have died of the dreaded disease, health officer Roberto Romero told the INQUIRER.

The baby had symptoms of the illness, but city health officials would not confirm whether he had meningoccemia.

"It is just a suspected case since no laboratory exam was done," Romero earlier said.

"It will remain as a suspected case," Romero said yesterday.

The Department of Health had said exposing the boy's body would risk spreading the disease if it was meningococcemia.

The city health office is closely monitoring 51 persons who had contact with the boy, including relatives, neighbors and people at the hospital and funeral parlor where the boy was brought. They are being given antibiotics.

The city health office also sprayed disinfectant in the affected neighborhood in Barangay Longos.

In Pasay City, officials of the San Juan de Dios Hospital said they had isolated a 3-month old boy who was showing symptoms similar to those of the disease.

"We are still waiting for confirmatory results," said Dr. Miguel Javier, hospital medical director.

Javier said the boy had lesions on his lower extremities. He added that such lesions were also symptoms of dengue.

City health officer Dr. Rosalinda Mangonon stressed that the boy was not from Pasay City.

With a report from Nancy C. Carvajal

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Compiled by L. Mangulat

BASKETBALL: NBA-Grizzlies vs Pistons; 8 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports; Pacers vs Spurs; 10:30 a.m. (r); STAR Sports—Memphis faces defending champion Detroit even as former ABA squads Indiana and San Antonio tangle at the SBC Center.

US NCAA-Princeton vs Duke; 1 p.m. (r); Notre Dame vs Seton Hall; 3 p.m. and 11 p.m. (r); ESPN—Take another look at the hardcourt battles featuring the Tigers against the Blue Devils and the Fighting Irish versus the Pirates.

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WHAT'S INSIDE

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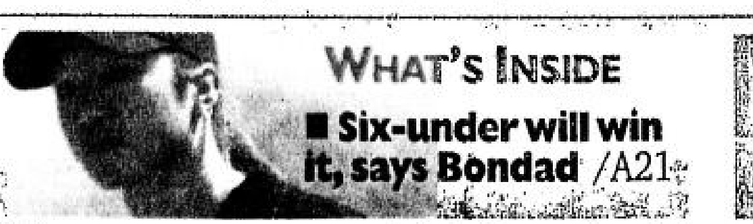

- Six-under will win it, says Bondad /A21

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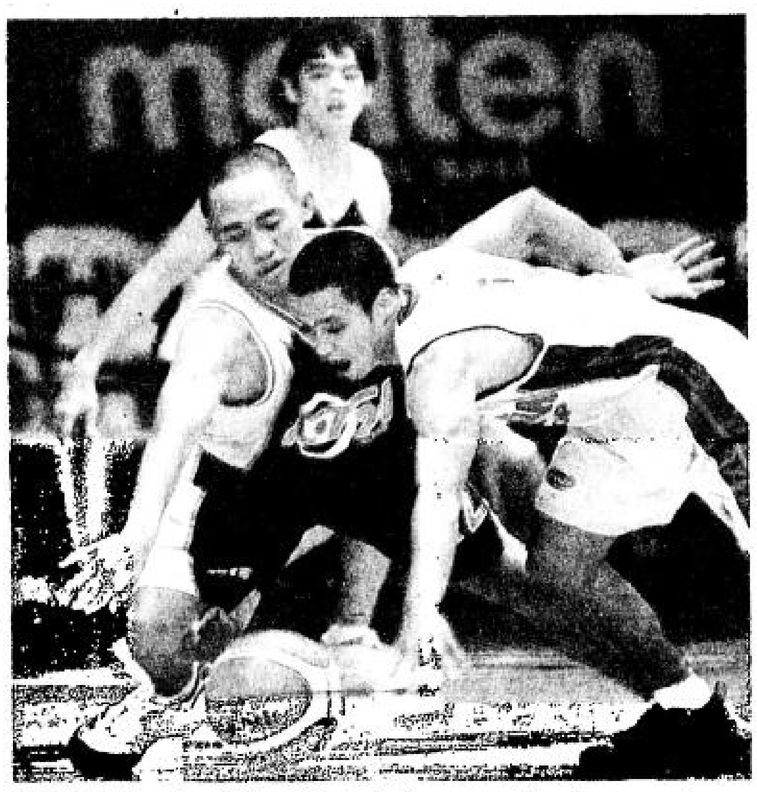
Jewels rap Archers; Eagles top P'masters



FROILAN Baguion (left) of Montaña Pawnshop disputes possession with JV Casio of ICTSI-La Salle in yesterday's game. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Montaña shines anew sans hurting Compton

MONTAÑA Pawnshop proved it can live without top gunner Alex Compton as the league-leading Jewels outsteadied ICTSI-La Salle, 68-63, yesterday in the PBL Open Championship at the Blue Eagle Gym in Loyola Heights.

Playing their second straight game without Compton, who strained a right calf muscle, the Jewels leaned on the outside shooting of Ariel Capuz, Erick de la Cuesta and Jondan Salvador to repulse the hard-fighting Archers.

GAMES TOMORROW
(FEU Gym)
2 p.m.—Toyota Otis-Letran vs Granny Goose
4 p.m.—ICTSI-La Salle vs Magnolia Ice Cream

The victory was the fifth straight and 10th in 12 games for the Jewels, cementing their hold of the solo lead in the two-round eliminations.

The Archers fell into a share of fifth place with Toyota Otis-Letran at 5-7.

In the second game, AMP-Ateneo caught Welcoat Paints napping in the first quarter en route to a 67-57 win that kept its playoff hopes alive.

Montaña and Magnolia Ice Cream are already assured of berths in the semifinals, although the Jewels need to beat AMP-Ateneo on Jan. 11 and the Wizards on Jan. 15 to remain No. 1.

Gabby Espinas and Emerson Oreta topscored with 12 points each as the AMP-Ateneo Eagles improved to 4-8 while handing the Paint Masters their sixth defeat in 12 games.

Working behind a sleek running game anchored on LA Tenorio, Espinas and Oreta, the Eagles moved out front, 24-7, in the first quarter and were never headed.

With head coach Franz Pumaren sitting on the bench and giving instructions from time to time, the Archers played an inspired game, engaging the taller Montaña squad in an exciting battle only to lose steam in the final three minutes.

The 6-foot-5 Francis Mercado impressed with his perimeter sniping but it was Capuz who delivered the punch that flattened the Archers.

Left unmarked after the Archers threw the double-team on Salvador, Capuz made them pay by knocking in a trey to shatter a 59-59 count, two minutes and 51 ticks left.

The Archers had chances to tie the count or take the lead but Mark Cardona missed his target twice.

The scores:

First Game

MONTAÑA 68—Mercado 12, De la Cuesta 11, Baguion 9, Salvador 8, Magpayo 8, Capuz 7, Juntilla 6, Espiritu 4, Vergara 3, Baluyot 0, Tolentino 0, Junio 0, Guerrero 0.

ICTSI-LA SALLE 63—Cardona 18, Tang 10, Yeo 10, Benitez 10, Cabatu 6, Gaco 4, Casio 2, Villanueva 2, Aquino 1, Gavino 1, Arana 0.

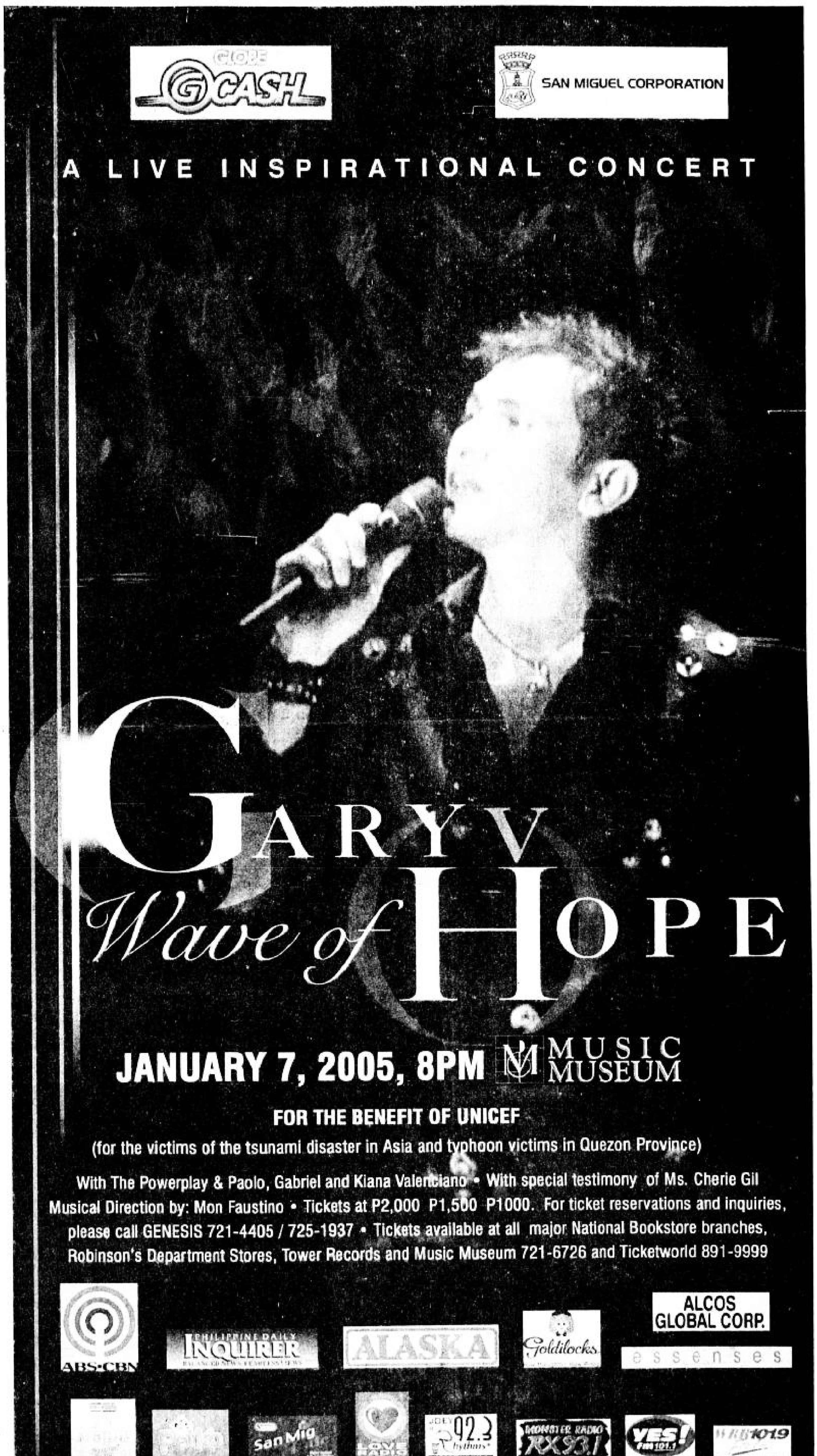
Quarters: 14-15; 34-30; 49-50; 68-63.

Second Game

AMP-ATENEO 67—Espinas 12, Oreta 12, Tenorio 10, Intal 10, Masina 10, Gatumbato 5, Alfad 4, Mendoza 2, Kramer 2, Membrere 0.

WELCOAT 57—Washington 22, Ortiguerra 8, Santamaria 7, Reyes 6, Dulay 5, Gamboa 5, Guevarra 3, Estrada 1, Tolomia 0, Dy 0, Yee 0.

Quarters: 24-7; 35-18; 55-40; 67-57.



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T'chargers, Phone Pals seek semis berth today

SHELL and Talk 'N Text gun for an outright seat in the semifinals when they cross paths in the mainer of the twin-bill today in the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

In the first encounter, San Miguel Beer and Alaska dispute the other wildcard seat—and the twice-to-beat advantage that goes with it.

Both sporting 12-6 records after the rankings phase of the elimination round, the Turbochargers and the Phone Pals are hoping to join the league-leading Barangay Ginebra Kings in the best-of-five semifinals.

The Gin Kings (13-5) subdued the Phone Pals on Christmas Day to assure themselves of an outright berth in the round and the No. 1 ranking in the playoffs.

The victory allowed coach Siot Tanquingcen's wards to skip the wildcard phase and the quarterfinals where teams try to knock each other out for semifinal slots.

"It will be a luxury if we advance outright to the semifinals. Talk 'N Text is still in the way," said Shell coach Leo Austria, whose Turbochargers are enjoying their best showing in the eliminations in years. "But we're not thinking about that yet.

Austria will again task Tony Dela Cruz to do a yeoman's job, something the 6-foot-5 shooting guard has consistently done for the Turbochargers in their past 18 games.

STANDINGS	W	L
*Brgy Ginebra	13	5
Talk N Text	12	6
Shell	12	6
SMB	9	9
Purefoods	9	9
Alaska	9	9
Coca-Cola	8	10
Sta. Lucia	6	12
FedEx	6	12
Red Bull	6	12

*assured of outright semis berth and No. 1 rankings in playoffs

GAMES TODAY
(*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:30 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Alaska
7:20 p.m.—Shell vs Talk 'N Text

There were off-nights for the four-time PBA Press Corps Player of the Week awardee but these paled in comparison to the revved-up performances Dela Cruz had given Austria and the rest of the Turbochargers.

Bereft of star-quality players, the Turbochargers will also lean on reliables Billy Mamaril, Rich Alvarez, Chris Jackson, Marlon Legaspi, Ronald Tubid, Celino Cruz, Kalani Ferreria and Rensy Bajar to repel the Phone Pals.

"They're unpredictable," said Talk 'N Text coach Joel Banal of the Shell crew. "I just hope our offense clicks and we can wear them down on defense."

Willie Miller, the league's 2002 season MVP, and Jimmy Alapag, last year's Rookie of the Year, form the Phone Pals' lethal backcourt combination and the two will get support in the paint from Mark Telan, Yancy De Ocampo, Don Camaso and Vic Pablo.

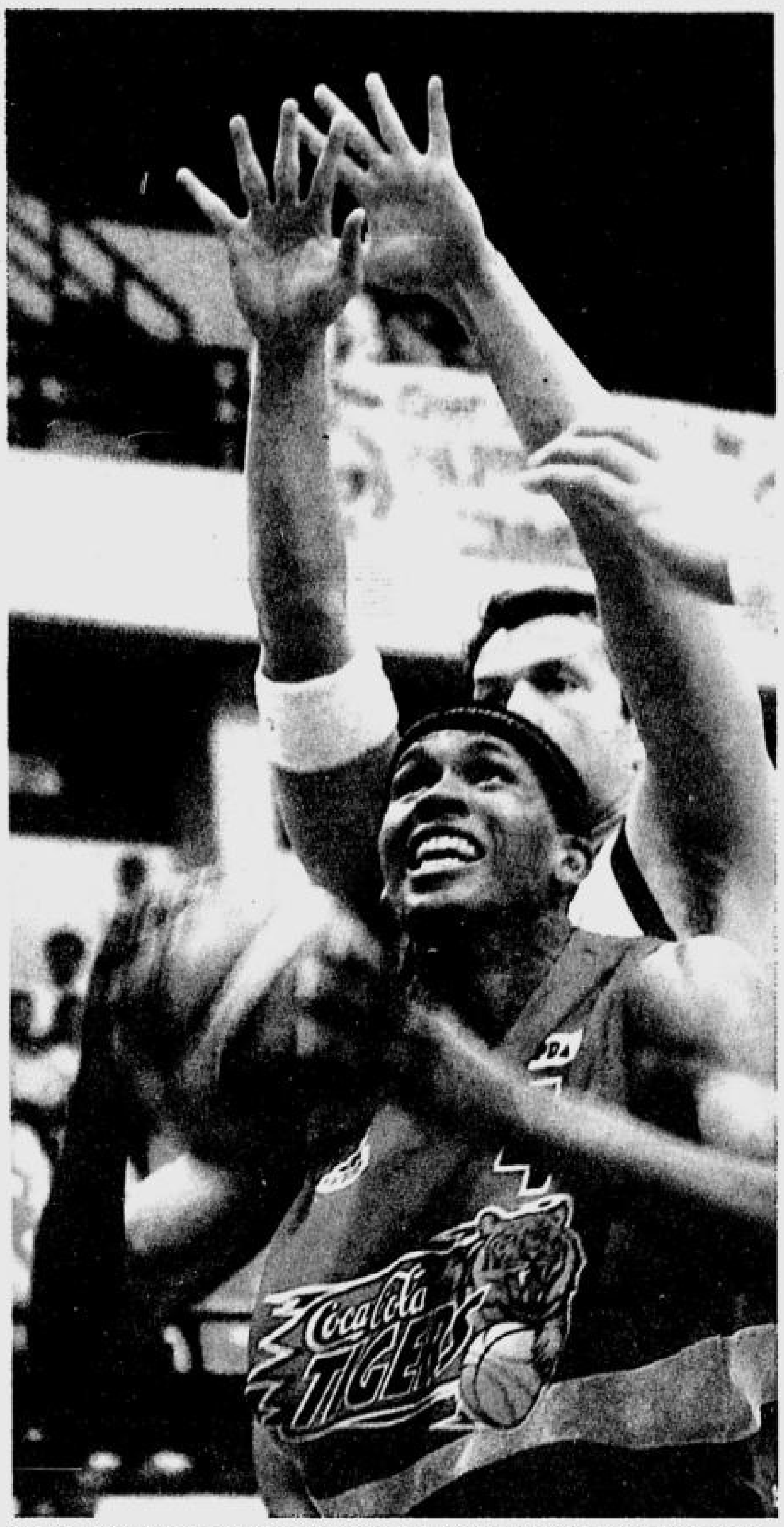
Although the Beermen (9-9) have admittedly been inconsistent in their recent games, Alaska coach Tim Cone is wary of San Miguel in the playoffs.

"They (Beermen) are really up and down," said Cone, whose Aces (9-9) ended the eliminations on a four-game winning run. "But they could turn things around within the season and go all the way.

"We don't want that to happen. We don't want San Miguel to get on a roll."

By defeating the Sta. Lucia Realtors the other night, the Aces froze the Purefoods TJ Hotdogs in sixth spot and gained the edge to contest the fourth and fifth seedings with the Beermen.

The third and fourth-ranked teams will enjoy a twice-to-beat advantage over FedEx (ninth) and Red Bull Barako (10th) in the wildcard phase, while Nos. 5 and 6 engage Nos. 8 and 7, respectively, in a best-of-three series. June Navarro



RAFI Reavis of Coca-Cola tries to put up a shot off John Ferriols of FedEx in their game Sunday. The Tigers prevailed. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Every day's a working day for Chot

By June Navarro

AS SOON as Chot Reyes was installed as head coach of the men's national basketball team, every day became a working day.

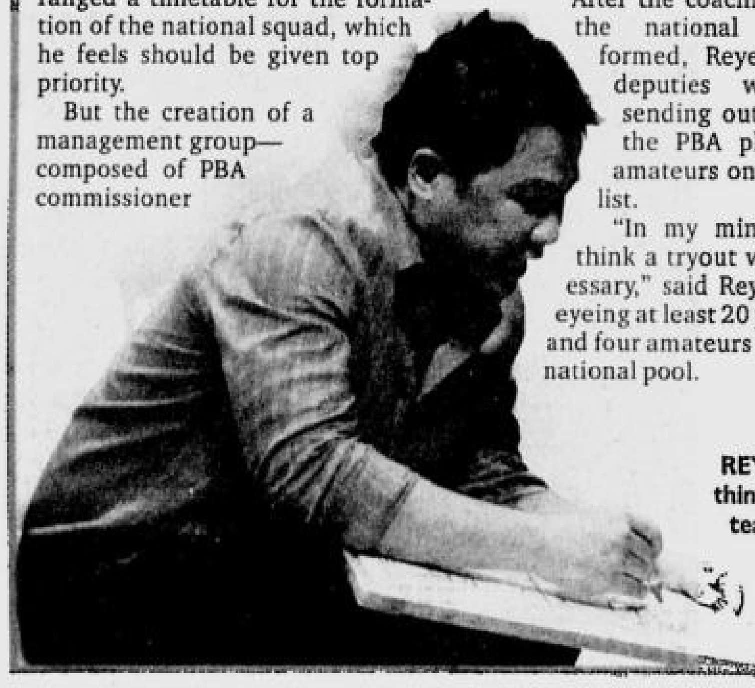
But the Coca-Cola mentor isn't complaining. In fact, Reyes has arranged a timetable for the formation of the national squad, which he feels should be given top priority.

But the creation of a management group—composed of PBA commissioner Noli Eala, PBA chair Buddy Encarnado and a still unnamed team manager—will be the first order of the day.

"I will report to them directly and there's no decision here that I will make without getting their opinions and suggestions," said Reyes yesterday.

After the coaching staff of the national team is formed, Reyes and his deputies will begin sending out invites to the PBA players and amateurs on their wish list.

"In my mind, I don't think a tryout will be necessary," said Reyes, who is eyeing at least 20 pro players and four amateurs to form the national pool.



REYES doesn't think a national team tryout is necessary.

"The affair will be strictly by invitation only."

Reyes ticked off the names of Jayjay Helterbrand and Eric Menk of Barangay Ginebra, Willie Miller of Talk 'N Text, Nic Belasco of San Miguel Beer and Tony de la Cruz of Shell as the first five of the national team.

Also mentioned to join the national pool were Jimmy Alapag, Brandon Cablay, Kenneth Duremdes, Lordy Tugade, Junthy Valenzuela, Enrico Villanueva, Dennis Espino, Mark Telan, Yancy de Ocampo, Billy Mamaril, Sonny Thoss, Renren Ritualo, Danny Seigle, Ali Peek, Mark Pingris and Rafi Reavis.

In the amateur ranks, the names of LA Tenorio (Ateneo), La Salle's Mac Cardona, Arwind Santos of Far Eastern and Welcoat's Anthony Washington were initially floated. Reyes says six amateur players may be included in the pool.

"There's a very slim chance that the amateur players will make the final lineup, but I want them to continue playing just the same," the coach said.

"This is a long program and you'll never know."

The national pool will kick off practice sessions on Feb. 1 but Reyes said some of the PBA players may not be able to join the initial workouts since it will be the peak of the playoffs in the ongoing Gran Matador Philippine Cup.

The team Reyes will form is slated to see action in the ABC Champion's Cup in June and in the Jones Cup in July. The team then vies in the Asian Championships in September.

The Asian Championships in Doha, Qatar, serves as qualifying tournament for the world championship in Saitama, Japan, next year.

Reyes is to meet with Eala and Encarnado today to find ways on how to synchronize the schedule of the PBA with that of the RP team calendar. Reyes says the training of the RP dribblers should not be disrupted.

Tomorrow, Reyes and league officials get together with the nine other PBA coaches to brainstorm on how to efficiently run the team.

"Ten heads are better than one," said Reyes. "Their insights will be valuable when we start to prepare the team."

Ramirez program includes Palaro revival

By Marc Anthony Reyes

NEWLY appointed Philippine Sports Commission officer-in-charge Butch Ramirez yesterday unveiled a five-point program as instructed by President Macapagal Arroyo.

Ramirez said he is not wasting time to start his to-do list, which includes ensuring the welfare of the athletes, forging a harmonious relationship with the Philippine Olympic Committee, reviving the Palarong Pambansa, establishing a training center in Baguio City, and winning the country's first Olympic gold medal in Beijing in 2008.

The five-year commissioner of the PSC who hails from Davao City, also promised a "redirection in the (PSC)" with the goal of saving money for the agency which often lacked funds in the past despite working on an average annual budget of P500 million.

RAMIREZ

Ramirez received his appointment papers, dated Jan. 4, from outgoing chair Eric Buhain, who is set to hand over the reins of the agency at a formal turnover today at 10 a.m. Buhain assumes his new job today as the chair of the Games and Amusement Board.

"The President specifically instructed me to take care of the athletes," said Ramirez. "They are the heart and soul of Philippine sports."

Ramirez said the agency will be "realistic" in handing the needs of the 500-plus athletes on the PSC payroll.

He also pledged to make sure the PSC keeps a healthy relationship with the POC. The two bodies often clashed in the past over their conflicting views on how each should do its job.

Ramirez is concurrently the deputy secretary general of the Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee. He is the personal choice of POC president and Philsoc vice chair Jose "Peping" Cojuangco for the PSC chairmanship.

As an OIC, Ramirez said his tenure will be based on his performance in the next few months, adding there are equally established sportsmen who can do the job as PSC chief.

Ramirez said he will study the possibility of reviving the Palaro, which was shelved last year in order to give athletes and the national sports associations time and space to prepare for the Olympic campaign in Athens.

He was pivotal in bringing the last Palaro to Tubod, Lanao del Norte in 2003.

The President, according to Ramirez, personally ordered him to work with Cojuangco in putting up an athletes' training center at the existing sports facilities at Teachers' Camp in Baguio City.

The PSC-owned facility presently houses several national athletes in track and field and wrestling.

Earlier, Cojuangco said he may shift his plan to establish a training center in Clark Field, Pampanga, to Baguio in deference to the wishes of the President, who met with sports officials last Tuesday in Malacañang.

PSC, Letran spikers rev up win run in V-League

By Musong R. Castillo

THE PHILIPPINE Sports Commission Lady Legends tripped an upset-conscious San Sebastian squad, 25-22, 25-23, 12-25, 25-20, yesterday in the Shakey's V-League eliminations at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

GAMES SUNDAY
(*Rizal Coliseum*)
1 p.m.—Lyceum vs Far Eastern
3 p.m.—La Salle vs Santo Tomas

Despite missing mainstays Teresa dela Rosa and setter Leonora Escollante, the Legends won for the fifth time in seven games to stay within arm's length of the rampaging Santo Tomas Tigresses.

San Sebastian dropped to 2-5.

La Salle stayed in second spot after improving to 5-1 via a 25-21, 25-15, 25-22 whipping of Letran in the second game.

Letran fell to 2-4.

Gone for the rest of tourney

Theresa Iratay subbed for Escollante and did a fine job. She was credited for 35 points in the match that lasted close to two hours. PSC coach Tats Suzara later announced that Dela Rosa will be gone for the rest of the tournament.

Dela Rosa, a relentless attacker, went under the knife last Dec. 29 to repair an ACL tear sustained in a classic victory over La Salle last month.

Escollante, also the national canoeing coach, is in Canada for a family commitment and will miss the next three PSC games.

"We'll just have to make do with the 10 players that we have," Suzara said. "Having a lineup full of veterans, we are able to make adjustments even during a game. Experience is a valuable weapon."

PSC hands full all game

Made up of the core of the 1993 Southeast Asian Games gold medal-winning team, PSC had its hands full all throughout as Jennifer Bohawe pelted the Legends with kills from practically everywhere.

Bohawe, also a beach volley standout for San Sebastian, led all scorers with 22 points, with Angela Descalsota backing her up with 20.

Still, it was a case of the Legends pulling out the stops when needed, as they ended the first two sets by winning points that could have gone either way.

Amelia Guanco, an enlisted woman in the Army, and Zenaida Ybanez-Chavez combined for 26 markers to lead the Legends.

PDI's Gonzales tops Maddogan Yule tourney

INQUIRER sports features editor Ernie Gonzales shot a net one-under 71 to top the recent Maddogan Golf Club Christmas tournament at tree-lined Villamor.

Gonzales turned in a gross 88 to win the event by five shots over Star sports editor Lito Tacujan, who signed for a similar 88 but played to a handicap of 12.

Bulletin sports editor Ding Marcelo (gross 93), INQUIRER Golf editor Jong Arcano (89), Ed Gaddi (92) and Jun Nonato (101) shared third spot with net 77s.

INQUIRER sportswriter Musong Castillo won the guest division by one shot over Inquirer sports editor Ted Melendres and by five over the Philippine Sports Commission's Tats Suzara with a net 75.

The group also elected a new president in PR man Bing Jaleco, who took over from INQUIRER news editor Artemio Engracia Jr. Jaleco has pledged a tournament every month.

The tournament, exclusive to members and guests of the organization that celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, was backed by Gov. Manny Piñol, former senator Tito Sotto, Lucio Yan, Mitsubishi Motors, Cinnabon/Southwest Shipping, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, the Manila Sports Council through Ali Atienza, DOT, GSIS, Smart, Baguio Country Club through general manager Anthony de Leon, NGAP president Benny Gopez, Mizuno-Master Sports through Lovell Gopez, Rod Feliciano of WWW Wxpress/DHL, Alice Andrada, NGAP secretary general V/Adm. Louie Fernandez, Ed Gaddi, Gen. Bobby Santiago of Aguinaldo, Gen. Roberto Sabularse of Villamor, Ramon Fernandez through URBI, Tats Suzara, Bravo Golf through Bert Bravo and Sen. Dick Gordon.

Gonzales half a point off Hastings leader

FILIPINO Jayson Gonzales defeated fellow International Master Peter Marusenko of Ukraine with the black pieces in the eighth and penultimate round Wednesday to stay within a point of the lead in the 80th Hastings Chess Congress in Hastings, England. With the win, the 33-year-old Gonzales pooled 5.5 points to share 7th to 14th places with GMs Mark Hebden, Bogdan Lalic, Valerij Neverov of Ukraine and Milos Pavlovic of Yugoslavia. German Fide Master Erik Zude leads with 6.5 points. *Marlon Bernardino*

ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

EFREN Reyes safely through second round

UPA PRO TOUR

Reyes, Luat lead Filipino assault

FILIPINO cue master Efren "Bata" Reyes opened his bid in the UPA Pro Tour Championship on a bright note yesterday, trouncing Oscar Dominguez at The Bicycle Club in Bell Gardens, California.

The 50-year-old Reyes, billiards' top money winner last year, set up a clash with American Charlie Bryant, who beat countryman Danny Petralba, in the next round.

Rodolfo "Boy Samson" Luat took the scalp of Dave Charter, 11-7, to arrange an all-Filipino showdown with US-based Jose "Amang" Parica, who took a first-round bye with compatriot Santos Sambajon.

Parica will meet the winner between Cliff Joyner and Jeff Abernathy.

Another touted Filipino, Francisco "Django" Bustamante is scheduled to face Damian Alishan at presstime.

Defending champion and 2001 World Pool ruler Mika Immonen of Finland also took a first-round bye. He will meet reigning World Trick Shot champion Mike Massey of the USA in the next round.

Other first-round winners include four-time world champion Johnny Archer of Atlanta, 2003 world champion and US Open Champion Ralf Souquet of Germany and Americans Ismael Paez, Jeremy Jones and Frankie Hernandez.

The event, sanctioned by the United States Professional Pool Players Association, will end on Jan. 9.

Following the finals on Sunday, the UPA will host the UPA Year End Awards Banquet honoring the 2004 Player of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Sportsman of the Year, and UPA Man of the Year. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Six-under will win it, says Bondad

By Musong R. Castillo

EVEN during practice, Frances Bondad is a picture of perfection, or at least someone who's trying to be perfect.

Five days into deep training for her defense of the Philippine Ladies' Amateur crown, the Australia-based teener now has an idea what it will take to win the tournament—being perfect enough to score six-under through 54 holes.

"Under-par will be a winning score," Bondad said during a break in practice at the wind-swept Manila Southwoods course on Wednesday.

"Six-under wins it, no doubt. But it's easier said than done."

Coached by patron Tony Arevalo since Wednesday last week, the vacationing 16-year-old is taking practice seriously, looking for the edge and following a religious routine with every shot and every putt she hits.

"I haven't seen anyone train this way," Arevalo said in Filipino. "She takes no shortcuts and treats each shot like it's the tournament already."

"The bottom line is still the heart. And the way I've seen her play, Frances has one of a champion."

The championship, slated Jan. 12-14 at the exclusive Manila Golf Club, is a wide-open race with Jayvie Agojo, former champion Carmelette Villaroman, Lora Roberto and 16-year-old Geleen Handog carrying the fight for the homegrown bets.

Agojo has been preparing long and hard for this, regarded as the most prestigious title for lady amateurs in the country. She had a chance to win it in the past but narrowly lost in a playoff as a 16-year-old to Heidi Chua in 2002.

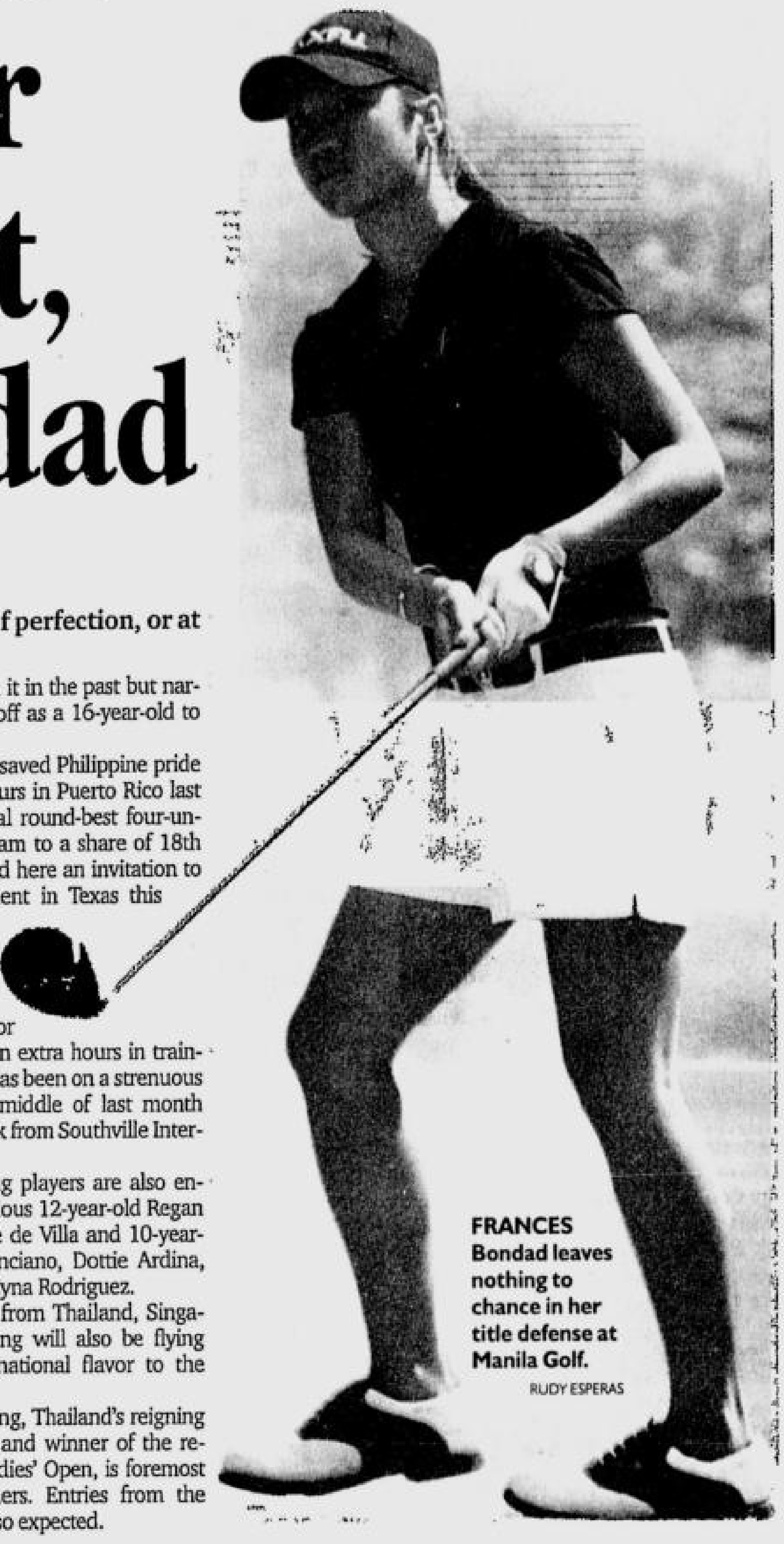
The pretty Agojo saved Philippine pride in the World Amateurs in Puerto Rico last year, shooting a final round-best four-under 68 to lift her team to a share of 18th spot. The feat earned here an invitation to The Spirit tournament in Texas this year.

Roberto, whose final-round collapse last year opened the door for Bondad, is putting in extra hours in training, while Handog has been on a strenuous regimen since the middle of last month when she got a break from Southville International School.

A bunch of young players are also entered, led by prodigious 12-year-old Regan de Guzman, Debbie de Villa and 10-year-olds Christina Potenciano, Dottie Ardina, Maan Legaspi and Cyna Rodriguez.

National players from Thailand, Singapore and Hong Kong will also be flying over, lending international flavor to the tournament.

Nontaya Srisawang, Thailand's reigning national champion and winner of the recent Hong Kong Ladies' Open, is foremost among the foreigners. Entries from the United States are also expected.



FRANCES Bondad leaves nothing to chance in her title defense at Manila Golf.

RUDY ESPERAS

SPORTSWATCH

Moto races roar off today in San Pablo

THE 2005 motocross season formally begins today with the staging of the inaugural round of the Smart-Red Horse Speedfest-National Motocross Championships in San Pablo City. The country's top motocross riders, led by eight-time national champion and 2004 Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) awardee Glen Aguilar of Caltex Revtex, are expected to see action in the event organized by the MP Turbo Sports and sanctioned by the National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association (Namssa). Aguilar is expected to be challenged anew by multititled Jovie Saulog, Bebet de la Cruz and "Rookie of the Year" awardee Kenneth San Andres. Namssa president Ken Falco said the San Pablo leg will serve as a fitting curtain-raiser to another year-round motocross season which includes stops in Batangas, Bulacan, La Union, Tuguegarao, Baguio, Roxas, Bacolod, Cebu, Brooke's Point and Iloilo. Highlight of the motocross season is the staging of the FIM Asian Motocross Championship in Puerto Princesa City.

Stage set for 17th SCUAA games

SIX state universities in Metro Manila are competing in the 17th season of the SCUAA-NCR games slated Jan. 10 to 15 at the Rizal Technological University campus in Mandaluyong City and in four other venues. RTU will host the bulk of the competitions to be also participated in by athletes from the Philippine Normal University, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Technological University of the Philippines, Philippine State College of Aeronautics and the Eulogio Amang Rodriguez Institute of Technology. A colorful opening ceremony precedes the games at the RTU campus on Boni Avenue with Mandaluyong Mayor Neptali "Boyet" Gonzales II as guest speaker. RTU will be the venue for eight events, while PUP will host competitions in three sports. Athletics, softball, baseball and football are scheduled at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex from Jan. 10 to 12, with PNU hosting the badminton tourney for men and women. Highlight of the closing ceremonies at RTU on Jan. 15 is the cheer-dance competition featuring entries from the six institutions. "The SCUAA never fails to bring back the passion and dynamism of our young athletes," said RTU president Dr. Jose Q. Macaballug.

World cycling federation lauds Lina

UNION Cycliste Internationale (UCI) president Hein Verbruggen has lauded PhilCycling chief Bert Lina for setting the tone for a unified cycling community in the country. "I wish to express, on behalf of the UCI, our thanks for the work you have personally done for our sport [cycling] in your country," Verbruggen said in a letter to Lina. "We are aware of the fact that this is due to your personal involvement and dedication to unify cycling again after years of turmoil, and that time and energy can now be spent to achieve progress for our sport." Lina was elected president of the Integrated Cycling Federation of the Philippines (ICFP) or PhilCycling in September 2003. Before his election, the Philippines almost received a suspension from the UCI due to leadership intramurals in the national federation. Lina, who also owns the FedEx Express team in the PBA, is also responsible for reviving the fabled Tour Pilipinas in 2003.

Fun games mark Checkmate opening

BLITZ chess, problem-solving and one-on-one with the masters highlight the opening of the first series of Milo Checkmate Saturday-only clinic tomorrow at two venues. The clinics will be held from 8:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. at the Badminton Conference Room of the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex on Vito Cruz, Manila, and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Metropolitan Chess Club headquarters at the fourth floor of J&F Divino Building on Aurora Boulevard, Quezon City, near the LRT 2 Anonas Station. The clinic, to be held in six consecutive Saturdays and one Sunday, is open to kids 5 years old and above. It will cover seven chess lectures and a final evaluation tournament. For inquiries, call the MCC at 4358412 or 0916-852-1069. Meanwhile, the MCC Unrated active chess will kick off this Sunday.

Year's first big derby kicks off at PCC

THE FIRST big cockfighting event of the year at the Pasay City Cockpit kicks off today with the Pasay Cockpit Cockers Association (PCCA) 4-cock derby series. Thirty-one regular PCCA members are fielding an entry each in the derby sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000, Sagupaan Mite Free and Sagupaan B-50 Forten. Pit managers Oscar Gonzales, Eric dela Rosa and Butchoy Olano said more than 60 fights are scheduled every derby. Participants accumulating the highest points after the series will be crowned the PCCA Cocker of the Year, an award won last year by former PBA commissioner Rudy Salud and Lito Orillaza through their entry, Winning Time Jobo. Meanwhile, the PCC will adopt a new hackfight format every Sunday featuring the 2-cock *ulutan* with a guaranteed prize of P6,000 for the champion. Registration fee is P1,000. The first 30 winners in hackfights every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday will get P1,000 each as bonus. The New Year Superfights One-Cock Ulutan Fastest Kill is also slated Wednesday with a guaranteed prize of P500,000. For inquiries, call 8431890, 8431746 and 8166750.

Billiards is now big-league stuff

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

BILLIARDS is enjoying a boom in the country because of Efren "Bata" Reyes, Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Filipino-Canadian Alex "The Lion" Pagulayan, three pool champions who dazzled the fans last year not only with their extraordinary skills with the cue stick but also because of the pleasant manner they conducted themselves. For their feats, they will be honored by the Philippine Sportswriters Association during its annual PSA Awards Night at the Manila Pavilion on Jan. 13.

Billiards has taken a big step in uplifting the sport previously associated with gamblers, hustlers and truants. With its growing universal appeal, it is not farfetched to say that billiards could very well be included in future Olympic Games where the next generation of Filipino athletes might yet win that elusive Olympic gold.

Filipino sports fans are incurable billiards aficionados. The record will show that every billiards tournament here is always well-attended even though the protagonists are not Filipinos. It is also on record that the country's leading television networks are now among its avid supporters, trying to outdo each other to grab the viewers' attention.

Through the years, the Philippines has hosted several successful international billiards tournaments which featured the world's best and the brightest. Among those who came here and showed their stuff were the multititled Ralf "Kaiser" Souquet and Thorsten "The Hitman" Hohmann of Germany, two-time world champion Chao Fong-pang of Taiwan, Japan's Kunihiko Takahashi, Marcus Chamat of the Netherlands, Mika "The Iceman" Immonen of Finland, five-time world champion Earl "The Pearl" Strickland, Johnny "The Scorpion" Archer, Rodney Morris and Corey Deuel of the United States. Much earlier, American pool legends Nick Varner, Mike Lebron and Kim Davenport, to name a few, also came here to play.

The most dominant player in contemporary billiards history, Reyes, also known as "The Magician" in pool circles, emerged the sport's top money winner last year, pocketing a total of $124,150 (about P7.4 million) in 16 local and international tournaments, including the $20,000 first prize he won in the World 8-Ball Championship in Fajairah, United Arab Emirates. Reyes also accumulated 920 points to finish fifth in the 2004 rankings of the World Pool-Billiard Association.

A native of Angeles City, Reyes also won the 2004 Derby City Classic, On Cue 3 Continental Conquest and three of four legs of the San Miguel Beer Asian 9-Ball Tour series. He may be old as an athlete at 50, but he is certainly not out of the game. Incidentally, Reyes was the PSA Co-Athlete of the Year with golfer Dorothy Delasin in 1999, the year he won the World Pool Championship in Cardiff, Wales.

Now based in Ontario, Canada, the 26-year-old Pagulayan finished second to Reyes in last year's money race, earning a total of $118,183, including the top prize of $75,000 he won in the World 9-Ball Championship in Taipei last July. However, Pagulayan fared better than Reyes in the world rankings, garnering 980 points which was good for third. Pagulayan, whose parents are from Isabela, may now also play for the Philippines in this year's Southeast Asian Games after the Bureau of Immigration granted his petition to reacquire his Philippine citizenship. Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez approved Pagulayan's request under the dual citizenship law which Congress enacted last year.

The most admired pool player in the country next to Reyes, Bustamante ended a long slump in 2004 by winning his first ever World Pool League title in Warsaw, Poland, nosing out Puyat Sports teammate Pagulayan, 8-7. He won $20,000.

"I waited too long for this," said Bustamante, who turned 41 last Dec. 29. His World Pool victory broke a nine-month winless spell since topping the Kansai Open in Japan. The triumph also erased the series of misfortunes he suffered in the Manila and Taipei legs of the SMB Asian 9-Ball Tour. Bustamante pocketed $48,200 in earnings and accumulated 730 points in the world rankings to place seventh.

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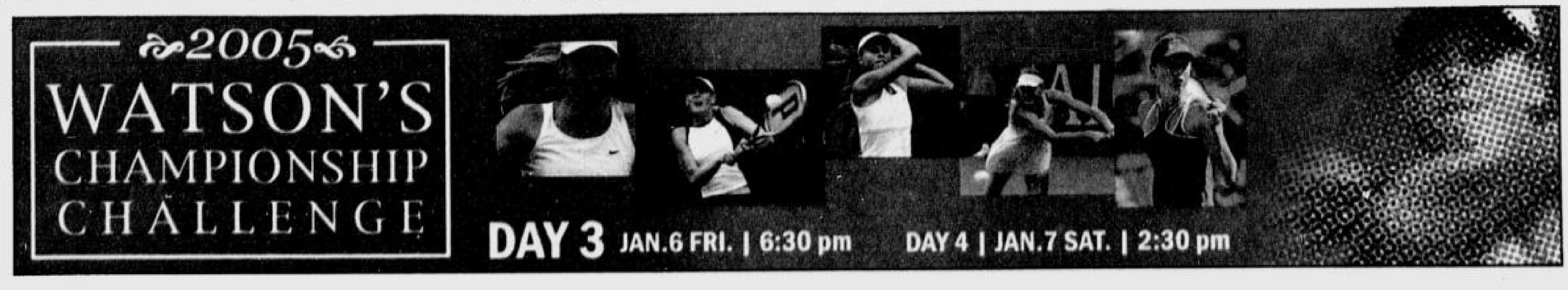
RED-LETTER SUNDAY. On Sunday, Jan. 9, the 13th staging of the annual Bulacan-Cavite Hackfight Series will be held at the Cavite Coliseum in Bacoor. Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and his father, former Sen. Ramon Revilla Sr., will host the visiting Bulacan cockers headed by human rights lawyer Pete Principe.

THREE OF THE BEST

MIGUEL Lazaro (center) of Mozcom Nitro Honda Racing celebrates at the podium with runner-up Renan Morales (left) and third placer Dahlia Guerrero after ruling the National Junior Touring Car Championship Series at the Batangas Racing Circuit recently. Lazaro also topped the novice category of the SVI Challenge Cup held at the Subic International Raceway last month. The team is backed by TS Tuning and Vortex Motorsports.


2005
WATSON'S
CHAMPIONSHIP
CHALLENGE
DAY 3 JAN.6 FRI. | 6:30 pm
DAY 4 | JAN.7 SAT. | 2:30 pm

Hopman Cup: Slovaks dampen Yanks' bid

PERTH, Australia—The United States' hopes of winning a third consecutive Hopman Cup were left hanging by a thread on Thursday after it suffered a surprising defeat to Slovakia.

Daniela Hantuchova beat Meghann Shaughnessy, 6-4, 6-2, and Dominik Hrbaty held off James Blake, 7-6, 6-4, to give the Slovaks an unassailable 2-0 lead.

Though Blake and Shaughnessy edged out Hantuchova and Hrbaty in the deciding doubles, the Slovaks gained a small measure of revenge for their defeat by the Americans in last year's final.

With one win and one defeat apiece from their respective Group B matches, the US, Slovakia and the Netherlands can all still qualify for Saturday's final.

The group scenario was complicated, however, by the withdrawal of Mark Philippoussis because of an adductor injury, costing the Australian team any chance of qualifying.

World number 324 Paul Baccanello will replace Philippoussis but Australia's results in their final match against the US will not count for themselves, though they will count for the Americans.

Slovakia meets the Netherlands in Friday's other game.

Hantuchova, who has slipped from her career-high ranking of five to number 31, produced a confident performance to see off Shaughnessy.

After trading breaks in the seventh and eighth games, Hantuchova clinched the vital break in the ninth game and after taking the opening set, she ran away with the second to earn victory in 69 minutes.

Hrbaty, who beat Philippoussis in his opening match on Monday, then fought off a tough challenge from Blake to give the Slovaks a surprise win.

"I didn't expect this, I already had my plane booked for Friday," Hrbaty said. "I knew it would be a tough match against James today and it was but I played really well and now we have a chance of making the final." Blake and Shaughnessy then improved the Americans' chances of qualifying for the final as they saved five match points before winning the mixed doubles.

"I think we're a bit disappointed with our singles, but they (Hrbaty and Hantuchova) played well," Shaughnessy said.

"We're just glad we managed to win the doubles." Argentina and Germany meet in a match later on Thursday that will decide the Group A winner. *Reuters*

JAMES Blake of the US reacts after a poor shot against Dominic Hrbaty of the Slovak Republic. AFP

MERCEDES OPEN

Wide-open race looms as PGA Tour blasts off

KAPALUA, Hawaii—What promises to be a wide-open season on the US PGA Tour kicks off here on Thursday with the $5.3 million Mercedes Championships.

Tiger Woods, seemingly poised to pounce after a lackluster 2004, will get a chance to find out if his solid play at the end of last year has carried over.

Woods won only once on the US tour last season, ended the year on a positive note with consecutive victories in Japan and at his own 16-man post-season event in California.

He says the swing changes he has been working on with new coach Hank Haney are coming together, and predicted he could match or even surpass his spectacular 2000 campaign, when he won three majors in a row en route to completing a chronological Grand Slam at the 2001 Masters.

"Honestly, I think I can be better," he said. "I'm always hungry heading into every season. I worked my tail off this past year, and the results I had toward the end of the year just made it so exciting.

"This is my 10th season on tour and that blows my mind. It's scary how fast that went. All of my buddies are ribbing me that I've got one year left before I turn 30." Vijay Singh, the man who displaced Woods atop the world rankings with a stunning nine tournament victories, says he's hoping not only to maintain his standard, but to improve.

"It's going to be hard to top," the 42-year-old from Fiji said. "I'm keen to see if I can beat last year's performance, and in my heart I think I can do that. I'm going to take it to the next level if I can." Singh finished second at the Mercedes last season by one stroke to Australian Stuart Appleby. Down five shots through 14 holes, Singh carded three consecutive birdies but couldn't catch Appleby, who became the third consecutive international player to win the event.

South Afrian Ernie Els won in 2003 and Spain's Sergio Garcia was victorious in 2002.

Els is hoping this week's event marks the start of a season that will see him add to his collection of major titles, which currently includes two US Opens and a British Open.

Last year he finished second at the Masters by a stroke and lost the British Open in a playoff.

"I would love to at least win a major this year," Els said. "It sounds very cocky, but that's always my mind-set. I'm still chasing the Grand Slam." Other top players entered here this week include Retief Goosen of South Africa, Spain's Sergio Garcia and Canadian Mike Weir.

Masters champ Phil Mickelson, however, is foregoing the event limited to last year's winners and will launch his season when the tour hits the mainland in San Diego, California, later this month. *AFP*

WOODS drives up the 10th fairway during the Mercedes Championships Pro-Am Wednesday. AP

Federer barges into round of 8

DOHA, Qatar—Tuning up to defend his Australian Open title, Roger Federer beat Greg Rusedski, 6-3, 6-4, to reach the quarterfinals of the Qatar Open on Wednesday.

Top-ranked Federer needed less than an hour to eliminate the 1997 US Open runner-up. Playing comfortably from the baseline, Federer was never in trouble, breaking Rusedski once in each set for his 19th successive win since the Athens Olympics.

Federer, who won three Grand Slam titles last year, next plays seventh-seeded Feliciano Lopez of Spain, who beat qualifier Uros Vico of Italy, 6-2, 7-6 (6), in the second round.

Third-seeded Sebastien Grosjean of France brushed aside Lee Hyung-taik of South Korea, 6-3, 6-0, to reach the last eight in his first tournament since the US Open four months ago. But the thigh injury which plagued him last year didn't appear, and he will face No. 8 Nikolay Davydenko of Russia.

Fabrice Santoro, the 2000 Qatar Open champion, won an all-French match against top-ranked junior Gael Monfils, 6-2, 4-6, 7-5. Monfils eliminated French Open champion Gaston Gaudio in the first round, and missed a match point against Santoro, who moved on to meet 2002 French Open champion Albert Costa.

Costa dispatched qualifier Marco Chiudinelli of Switzerland, 6-3, 6-2.

No. 6 Ivan Ljubicic of Croatia, last year's runner-up, will play Rafael Nadal, who beat Spanish countryman Fernando Verdasco, 6-2, 6-4. *AP*

Dementieva stuns Sharapova in HK

HONG KONG—Elena Dementieva upset fellow Russian and Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova, 6-7(2), 6-3, 6-1, Wednesday in the Champions Challenge tennis tournament.

"I think it's a very nice start for the year, especially against a good player. I did a lot of positive things today," said Dementieva, last year's French and US Open finalist.

"My serve needs improving and I think it was probably the weakest link of my game last year. My game is improving," said Dementieva, who is ranked sixth in the world. It was her second win over Sharapova in four encounters.

The fourth-ranked Sharapova was let down by her erratic play. She appeared distracted by several line-calls and was startled early in the first set when a boy threw a tennis ball into the court from the spectator stand.

"I worried about my own safety. I want to protect myself. I want to be protected," the 17-year-old Russian said about the thrown ball. *AP*

Sony Ericsson backs WTA Tour for $88M

NEW YORK—Mobile phone maker Sony Ericsson will become the global title sponsor of the WTA Tour, paying $88 million (euro 66.5 million) over the next six years to the women's pro tennis circuit in a deal announced Wednesday.

It's a sign of resurgence for the tour, which had been without a global sponsor for the past two seasons, relying instead on regional deals. In the past, Virginia Slims cigarettes, Kraft General Foods, software maker Corel and, most recently, health and beauty products manufacturer Sanex have had their company names attached to the women's tour.

"It's something that was well-deserved and maybe a little bit of time in coming," No. 1-ranked Lindsay Davenport said in a telephone interview from California.

"We've had a lot of sponsors come in and out the last couple of years. It's nice seeing a huge global company come in behind us. To have a company as large as they are really put in their money and stand behind us is really a huge boost of confidence." *AP*

Maradona returns to Cuba, resumes treatment

HAVANA—Argentine soccer hero Diego Maradona returned to Cuba on Wednesday to resume treatment for a cocaine addiction after spending the holidays with his family in Buenos Aires.

Maradona left Buenos Aires early Wednesday, and after missing a connecting flight in Panama, didn't arrive in Havana until nearly midnight.

He was picked up by an official entourage of cars on the Havana airport runway and whisked away without speaking to journalists gathered at the airport.

Maradona, 44, has been hospitalized repeatedly over the last four years in his battle with severe health problems brought on by his drug usage.

The soccer great, who received drug treatment in Cuba in 2000, decided to come back to the Caribbean island last fall after a relapse confined him to a psychiatric hospital in his native Argentina and sparked unsuccessful attempts by his family to keep him there.

He has cited the need for greater privacy as a reason for seeking treatment in Cuba.

While on the island in the past, the hero of Argentina's 1986 World Cup title run stayed at an upscale health tourism resort where his movements were unrestricted and he often invited people to his guest house.

During this latest stretch, however, Maradona has been secluded at a mental health center in a quiet, palm-tree lined area of western Havana. After his arrival Sept. 20 he was not seen publicly until Dec. 5, when he left for Buenos Aires.

In 2000, Fifa chose Maradona and Pele as the greatest players in soccer history. Maradona retired in 1997. *AP*

MONGOLIAN-BORN "yokozuna," or sumo grand champion, Asashoryu (left), accompanied by fellow sumo wrestler Asasekiryu from Mongolia (right), demonstrates a ceremonial performance called the "dohyo-iri" at Meiji Shrine in Tokyo on Thursday. AFP

Sport stars, groups lend hand to tsunami victims; Schu mourns bodyguard's death

PARIS—Seven-time world Formula One champion Michael Schumacher, who has donated $10 million to the victims of last week's Asian tsunamis, revealed on Wednesday that one of his bodyguards died in the tragedy.

Schumacher said on his website that the bodyguard, Burkhard Cramer, 44, was killed at Phuket in Thailand.

Cramer's two children Henry, 5, and 4-year-old Mika, are also understood to have died.

"The dawning of the New Year has not been as joyful for us this year because of the catastrophe in Asia. We sympathize with the victims in their grief," Schumacher said Tuesday after his pledge of $10 million.

The death toll from the massive December 26 earthquake and resulting tidal waves around the Indian Ocean stands at around 146,000.

Schumacher, second only to Tiger Woods on the Forbes magazine of the world's richest sportsmen last year with an annual income of $80 million, is well known for his charitable gifts.

In 2004, he donated 1.15 million euros to Unesco and 770,000 euros the year before.

Throughout the world, leading sports personalities have rallied to the call for help.

Tracy McGrady and Kobe Bryant and five other National Basketball Association stars are teaming up with Unicef to raise money.

Indiana's Jermaine O'Neal, Houston's Bob Sura, Memphis' Pau Gasol and Mike Miller, and Toronto's Jalen Rose have also pledged to donate $1,000 for every point they score in specific games this week.

Ireland's Ryder Cup hero Padraig Harrington announced that all proceeds from the his Charity Golf Show on Jan. 22 in Dublin would go toward the Asian Tsunami Disaster Fund.

The 1,500 tickets for the show range in price from 30 euros for children to 65 for adults.

Sharapova had already donated $10,000 to the Thai government's victim relief fund during an exhibition event last week in Bangkok.

The German football federation and league announced a donation of 1.5 million euros, while Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich will stump up at least 300,000 euros for a school or orphanage project in Sri Lanka.

Football's world ruling body Fifa also pledged $2 million, but specified that it was destined to help rebuild the footballing infrastructure in Asian countries hit by the tsunamis. *AFP*

Shaquille too hot; Heat torch Knicks

LEBRON James of the Cleveland Cavaliers, wearing his fitted mask to protect a face injury, dunks against the Atlanta Hawks. REUTERS

NEW YORK—Shaquille O'Neal had 33 points and 18 rebounds and Dwyane Wade chipped in with 21 as the Miami Heat quickly returned to winning ways on Wednesday, dumping the New York Knicks, 102-94.

After having their franchise record 14-game winning streak snapped by the Seattle SuperSonics on Monday, the Heat took control early on the way to improving their record to an Eastern Conference best 26-8.

Wade also had nine assists and six rebounds as Miami avoided losing back-to-back games for the first time since November.

Stephon Marbury had 28 points for the Knicks, who continue to look for their first win in 2005.

In Cleveland, Zydrunas Ilgauskas had 28 points while LeBron James flirted with his first career triple-double in sparking the Cavaliers to a 101-85 win over the Atlanta Hawks.

James, playing his second game wearing a mask to protect a broken left cheekbone, carded 20 points, nine assists and six rebounds as the Cavs registered their sixth consecutive win over the woeful Hawks.

Antoine Walker had 26 points and 10 rebounds for Atlanta but could not prevent the Hawks (5-25) from absorbing a fifth straight loss.

In Houston, Shawn Marion scored 22 points and the Phoenix Suns had six players in double figures as they blasted past the Rockets, 108-98.

Tracy McGrady answered with 24 for the Rockets, while Yao Ming had 14 points and 10 rebounds.

In Orlando, Steve Francis hit for 35 points, snared 11 rebounds and added six assists as the Orlando Magic silenced the Seattle SuperSonics, 105-87, to record their first win in five games.

In Dallas, the Mavericks used a balanced attack led by a season-high 28-point effort from Jason Terry to tame Kobe Bryant and the Los Angeles Lakers, 118-104.

Bryant, the NBA's second leading scorer, had a game-high 32 but the Mavericks countered with six players in double figures as Dallas collected their fourth straight win.

In Charlotte, Gerald Wallace and rookie sensation Emeka Okafor both nailed double-doubles to lead the Bobcats to a shock 102-84 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Wallace potted 21 points and had 12 rebounds while Okafor chipped in with 18 points and 10 rebounds as the Bobcats stopped a six-game losing skid.

In Salt Lake City, Kenny Thomas poured in 30 points and Allen Iverson added 23 as the Philadelphia 76ers won over Utah Jazz, 106-99.

In Toronto, Chris Bosh continued to assume the leadership role left vacant when Vince Carter was traded to New Jersey, pouring in 23 points and grabbing 13 rebounds as the Raptors held on to beat the Sacramento Kings 96-93. *Reuters*

Complete results:

Boston 84, Golden State 83; Toronto 96, Sacramento 93; Charlotte 102, Minnesota 84; Orlando 105, Seattle 87; Cleveland 101, Atlanta 85; Miami 102, New York 94; Milwaukee 97, New Jersey 74; Chicago 95; New Orleans 89; Dallas 118, LA Lakers 104; Phoenix 108, Houston 98; Philadelphia 106, Utah 99; LA Clippers 102, Portland 98.

Doc recommends back surgery for Divac

LOS ANGELES—A doctor has recommended Vlade Divac undergo surgery to repair a back injury, which has caused him to miss all but eight games so far of the National Basketball Association season.

The Los Angeles Lakers center could miss another 12 weeks if he decides to opt for the surgery to fix a herniated disk.

That would mean Divac would return for just the final few weeks of the 2004-2005 regular season, which ends on April 20.

Divac initially injured the back three months ago during practice. He reinjured it two weeks ago while getting up off his sofa at home.

The 36-year-old Divac is averaging 0.8 points, 1.1 rebounds and 4.6 minutes per game.

After spending the past six seasons with Sacramento, Divac returned to the Lakers in July signing a two-year contract $10.3 million. He had back surgery 12 years ago on a different herniated disk. *AFP*

Cordero rules 12-under class of junior meet

KYLE Cordero emerged the only Filipino champion on the fourth day of the 16th Andrada Cup Age-Group Tennis Championships as the Japanese flexed their muscles at the Ynares Socio-Cultural Sports Center.

Cordero, the top seed in the boys' 12 years and under division where no foreign players were entered, outplayed fourth pick Leander Lazaro, 6-3, 6-3, to claim one of the three titles staked yesterday.

Cordero's victory came after the vaunted Japanese juggernaut, composed of the top two campaigners in the 16 and 14 and under classes from the Hyogo Prefecture, worked with precision to claim the other two titles while threatening to sweep the other events.

Sixteen-year-old Imoto Kumiko from the Akashi Josai High School bagged the premier girls' 18 years and under title by routing second seed Trudy Amoranto, 6-3, 6-2, and then lined herself up for a "double' by ousting second seed Cristine Patrimonio, 6-1, 4-6, 6-3, in the 16 and under semis.

Kumiko tangles with compatriot Koga Ai, a 6-7 (5), 6-2, 7-5 winner over Akimoto Aiko, for the title today.

Ai will also be eyeing a double as she annexed the 14 and under crown later by defeating the top-seeded Patrimonio, 6-2, 6-4, in the 14 and under finals.

It was also a virtual Japanese show in the boys' section with Sano Kohichi, the visitors' top campaigner, forging a duel with Ralph Kevin Barte for the 18 and under plum.

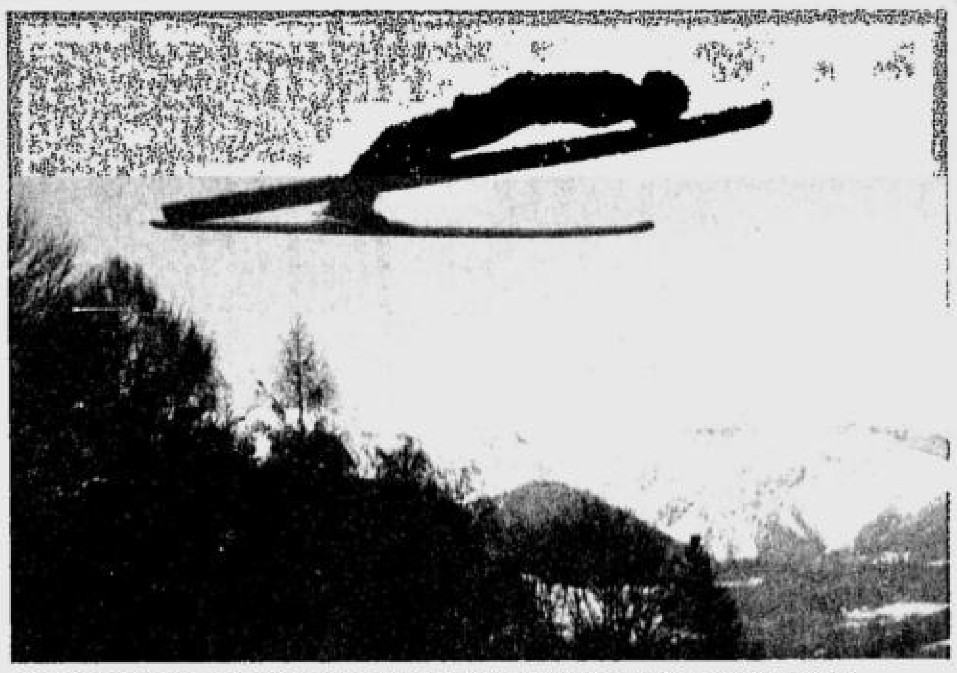
Kohichi, one of three Japanese in the 16 and under semifinals, bumped off second seed Jandrick de Castro, 7-5, 6-0, in the 18-under semis after Barte romped past Angelo Patrimonio, 6-1, 6-1.

Joining Kohichi in today's semis in the 16 and under were his Final 4 rival and compatriot Sibutani Tatsuya and Sakai Yuhta, who will face fifth seed Gerard Michael Ngo.

It will also be an all-Japan finals in the 14 and under as Koh Kento upended top seed Patrick Arevalo, 2-6, 7-5, 6-0, and Yuhta topped Ngo, 6-1, 6-1, in the semifinals.

The only other Filipino to shine was Jacob Lagman who snared the unisex 10 years and under title late Wednesday via a 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (5) decision over Pocholo Macalino.

The tournament, a Group 2 event sponsored by Wilson balls, Smash Cafe and Thaddeus Sporting Goods, continues today starting at 10 a.m.



SKI JUMPER: Thomas Morgenstern of Austria takes a qualifying jump prior to the final race of the "Four Hills competition" FIS World Cup in Ski-Jumping in Bishchofshofen on Wednesday. AFP

Winter Olympic organizers covering woes under snow

PRAGELATO, Italy—By the time Olympic ski jumpers start flying over this hamlet near Turin, organizers hope scandals that have tarnished preparations will be buried under a thick layer of snow.

After a year in which the organizers of the 2006 Winter Olympics weathered police raids, cash problems and political intrigue, the head of the TOROC organizing committee is looking forward to brighter things.

"For a time, even a brief time, we'll be the international capital of sports. It will transform the image of the city and the region," Valentino Castellani told Reuters.

The former mayor of Turin threatened to resign last year when TOROC found itself in a political storm.

But now more money is flowing in and work is progressing on the sites that will be the center of sporting attention during the Games, which run from Feb. 10 to 26, 2006.

"All the ceremonies and events are an opportunity to show the world our culture and history, our tradition of wine and food, to paint a beautiful picture of Italy," Castellani said.

They are also proving an opportunity to show the world some huge blunders.

For TOROC, the problems started with a 180-million-euro ($245-million) hole in its budget after sponsors such as cash-strapped Italian airline Alitalia pulled out.

TOROC sources said its cash worries were exacerbated by state-owned companies failing to sign sponsorship deals, while politicians in Italy's ruling center-right coalition blamed the shortfall on former left-wing mayor Castellani.

Italy's government has now stepped in to bridge the budget gap with a 150-million-euro sponsorship by state-owned Sviluppo Italia due to be signed early this year.

The scandals have highlighted what the world sees as typically Italian problems: corruption, murky deals in the building sector, leaking budgets and Kafkaesque bureaucracy.

Still, Castellani hopes the Games will ultimately boost the former Italian capital's image—Turin is mainly known as an industrial sprawl, home to carmaker Fiat. Organizers take comfort in the fact that they have sold 5.5 million euros worth of tickets. *Reuters*

Kukoc returns after 23-game injury spell

MILWAUKEE, Wisconsin—Croatia's Toni Kukoc, who has missed the last 23 Milwaukee Bucks' games with a hip strain, was activated from the injured list by the National Basketball Association club on Wednesday.

Sidelined since November 12, Kukoc has played in just four games this season, averaging 1.8 points and 1.8 rebounds.

The Bucks made a pair of other moves Wednesday, releasing guards Kendall Gill and Eddie House.

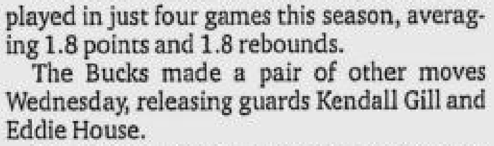
Milwaukee (9-18) is hoping Kukoc can help stop a losing skid. The Bucks have lost three straight and eight of their last 11 games and are in last place in the Central Division. *AFP*

Penny injured anew

NEW YORK—Veteran swingman Penny Hardaway was back on the injured list on Wednesday, just four days after returning from injury with the New York Knicks.

Hardaway, who had failed to score in two games since his return, was put on the injured list with a strained right hamstring—the same injury that saw him miss 14 games.

Hardaway is averaging 5.8 points and 2.5 rebounds in 16 games this NBA season. *AFP*



AT SANTA ANA BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. My Lady Hannah 2. Golden Account
Race 2—1. Gabriela 2. Pasirit 3. Last Dance 4. Palutina
Race 3—1. Flying Jordan 2. Earl Gray 3. Gemstone
Race 4—1. Marque/Bulakeña 2. Silver Rose 3. Wear the Fox Hat 4 Empire Cat
Race 5—1. Hakuna Matata 2. Dynamic Jason 3. Naughty 4. Western Dancer 5. Never Enough
Race 6—1. I Miss You 2. Habagat 3. Seven Lakes
Race 7—1. Beatitudes 2. Here I Come 3. Chances Are 4. Vinia's Pride 5. Voice of Destiny
Race 8—1. High Octane/Arrivederci 2. Paramount 3. Aya's Dream 4. Sheer Courage
Race 9—1. Gleaming Heart 2. Maximus/Big Mama 3. Wild Orphan 4. Noble House 5. Sham Sham 6. Guts

Slain cycling titlist buried

MOSCOW—Russian Olympic cycling gold medalist Dmitri Nelyubin, fatally stabbed on New Year's night, was buried on Wednesday in his home city of St. Petersburg.

NTV television said unidentified people attacked Nelyubin, 33, a member of the Soviet team which won the 4-km pursuit at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, early on January 1 when he was setting off fireworks with friends and family outside his home. Criminal attacks have happened in the past few years in St. Petersburg. *Reuters*

Villanueva turns over stronger GAB to Buhain today

By Salven L. Lagumbay
Contributor

WHEN Eduardo Villanueva steps down today as Games and Amusements Board chair, he will be handing over to Eric Buhain a government agency stronger, more transparent and attuned to the times.

After four years at the GAB helm, Villanueva will move on to the Philippine National Bank, where he has been appointed by President Macapagal-Arroyo as one of its directors.

Taking his place is Buhain, the former national star swimmer who also made a good account of himself while serving as chair of the Philippine Sports Commission and whose landmark achievement at the PSC is the direct involvement of the President and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo in local sports development.

BUHAIN

VILLANUEVA

Under Villanueva's watch, the GAB matured into a transparent, participative government agency which toiled to benefit the professional athletes.

Among his silent achievements was the lifting of the ban imposed by the Japan Boxing Commission on Filipino boxers after several of them reportedly overstayed their visas. The effort paved the way for Filipino boxers to once again fight for good pay in that country.

Villanueva held seminars for boxing officials and enlisted the help of international referee Bruce McTavish and judge Ferdinand Estrella in those sessions. As a result, the most qualified officials now work local and international fights.

"There's also the new set of rules in boxing which has been codified and is now at par with that of other major world boxing sanctioning body," said GAB commissioner Emmanuel Palabrica. "It will be implemented this year. It took us a while to finish it because there were so many things that needed to be amended."

The GAB, through its regional offices, gave out more than half a million pesos to disabled and destitute boxers in 2003. To recognize the achievements of active boxers, the agency also instituted the "Boxer of the Month" with each awardee getting an insurance incentive and goodies from sponsoring companies.

The GAB's participation in world boxing conventions also fortified the world rankings of 103 Filipino boxers.

Villanueva was elected member of the Board of Governors of the World Boxing Council (WBC) and vice president of the Orient-Pacific Boxing Federation (OPBF). Palabrica, on the other hand, was appointed legal adviser of the World Boxing Association (WBA) and member of the PABA ratings committee.

During a convention in Bali two years ago, WBA president Gilberto Mendoza ordered the adoption of the GAB's proposal on ring and medical measures.

Gary V sings for victims of calamities

"WAVE of Hope" is a fund-raising concert organized by Manila Genesis Entertainment and Management and Unicef-Philippines for calamity victims in the country and across South Asia.

The concert, set tonight at 8 at the Music Museum in Greenhills, features the inspirational music of Gary Valenciano, Unicef National Ambassador of Goodwill, with guest appearances by Paolo, Gabriel, and Kiana Valenciano, and Powerplay.

Actress Cherie Gil will give a testimony on her Phuket experience prior to the show. Musical director is Mon Faustino.

All proceeds will be donated to the Unicef Fund to help rehabilitate areas hit by Typhoon Yoyong in Real, Quezon, and the tsunami in Malaysia, Indonesia, Somalia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the Maldives.

For details and ticket inquiries, call 7214406 or 725-1937.

MR. PURE ENERGY's plea "Take them out of the dark."

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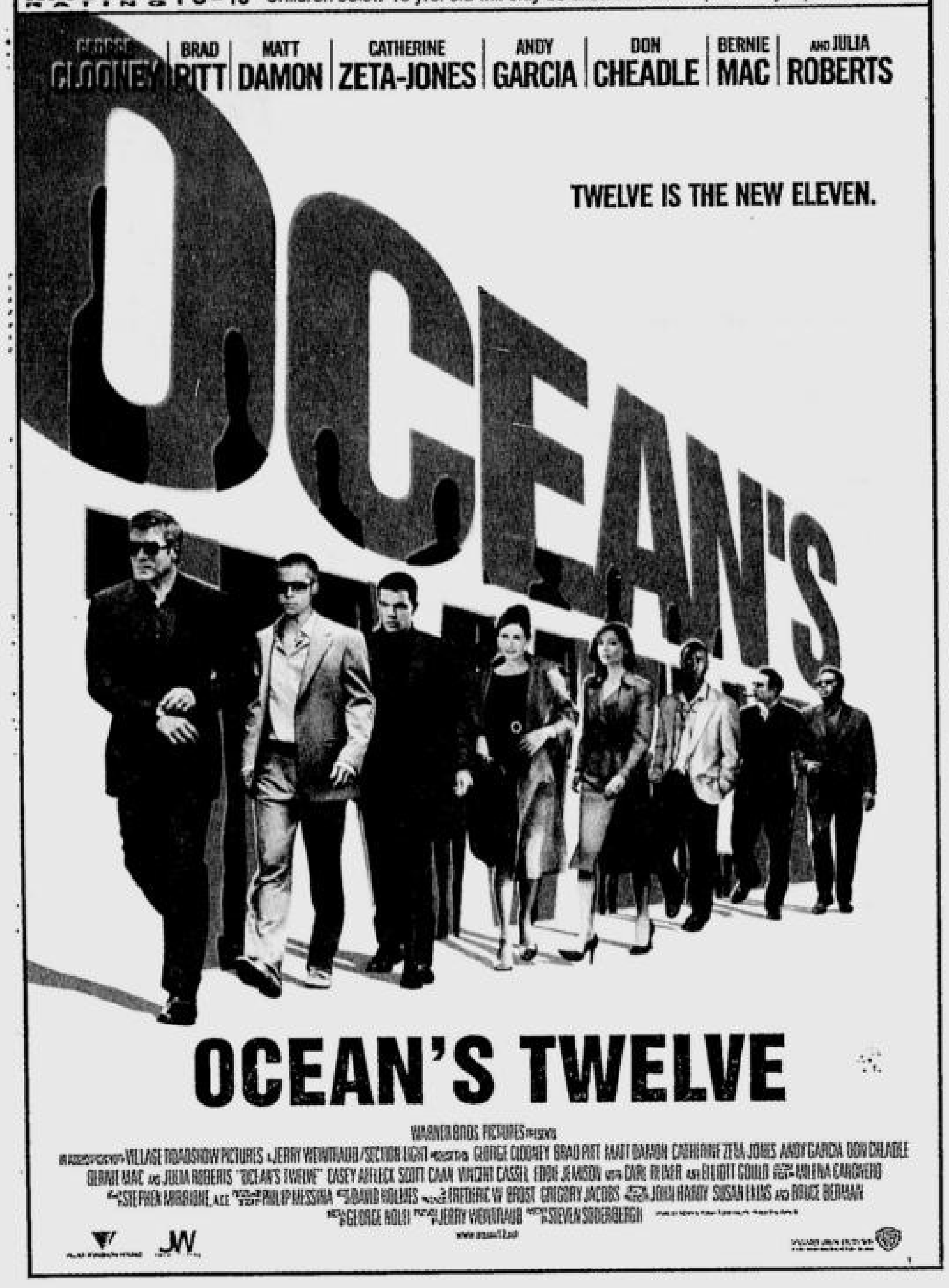

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BRAD PITT
MATT DAMON
CATHERINE ZETA-JONES
ANDY GARCIA
DON CHEADLE
BERNIE MAC
AND JULIA ROBERTS

TWELVE IS THE NEW ELEVEN.

OCEAN'S TWELVE

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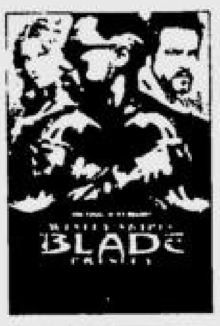

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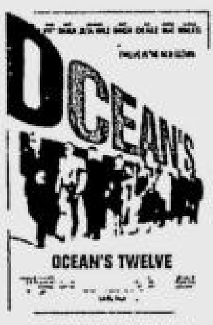

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LUZON

sm city pampanga
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
5 MANO PO 3
6 ENTENG KABISOTE

sm city marilao
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
4 ENTENG KABISOTE

sm city baguio
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
4 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

sm city bacoor
1 SIGAW
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE
5 BLADE TRINITY
6 ENTENG KABISOTE
7 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
8 MANO PO 3

sm city batangas
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

sm city dasmariñas
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 OCEAN'S TWELVE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

sm city lucena
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 MANO PO 3
3 ONE MISSED CALL
4 SO HAPPY TOGETHER

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

sm city cebu
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
4 ONE MISSED CALL
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
6 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
7 ENTENG KABISOTE
8 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

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1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 RESERVED
3 BLADE TRINITY
4 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 ONE MISSED CALL
6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
7 RESERVED
8 SO HAPPY TOGETHER

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2 BLADE TRINITY
3 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5 ENTENG KABISOTE
6 ONE MISSED CALL

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2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 THE FORGOTTEN
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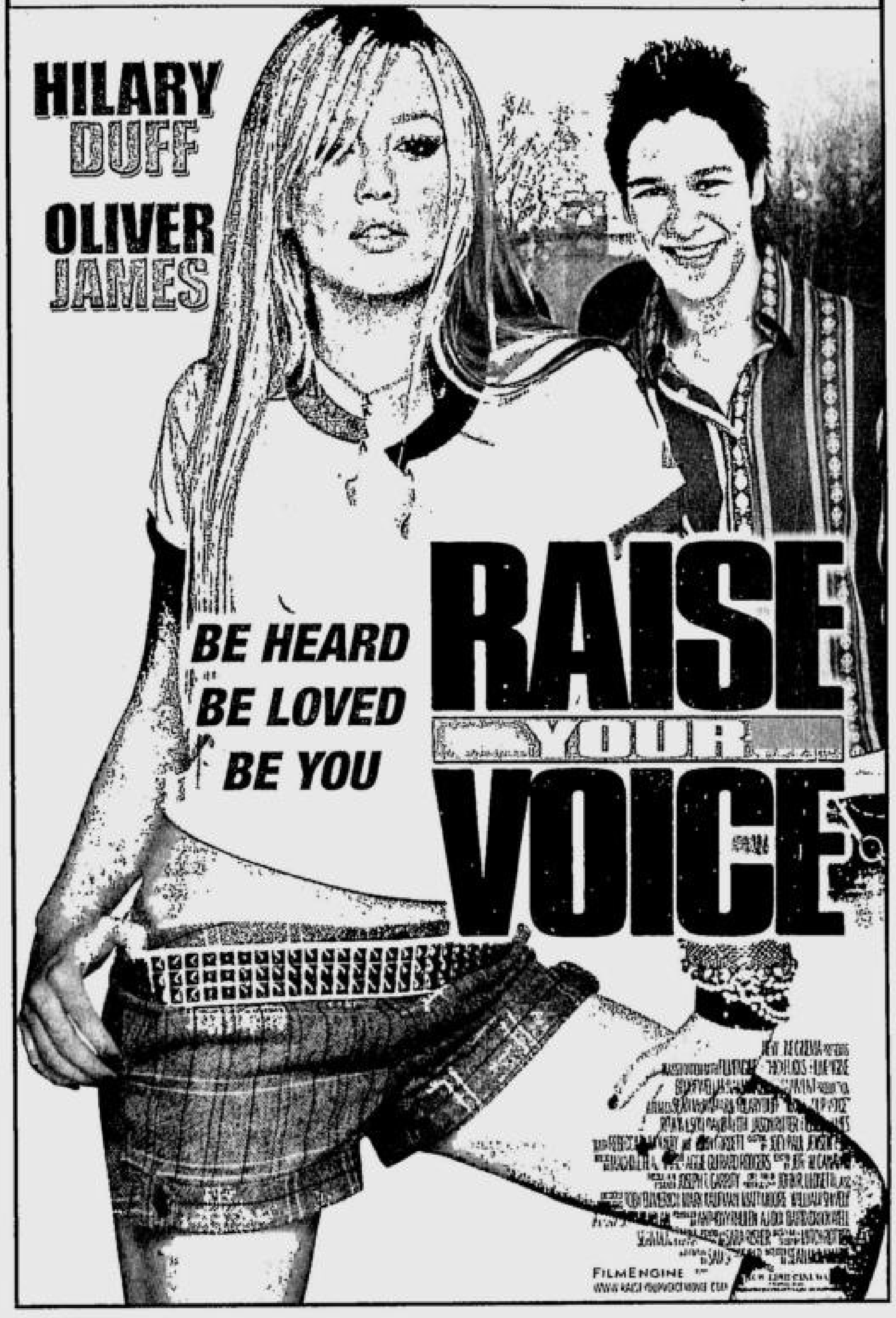

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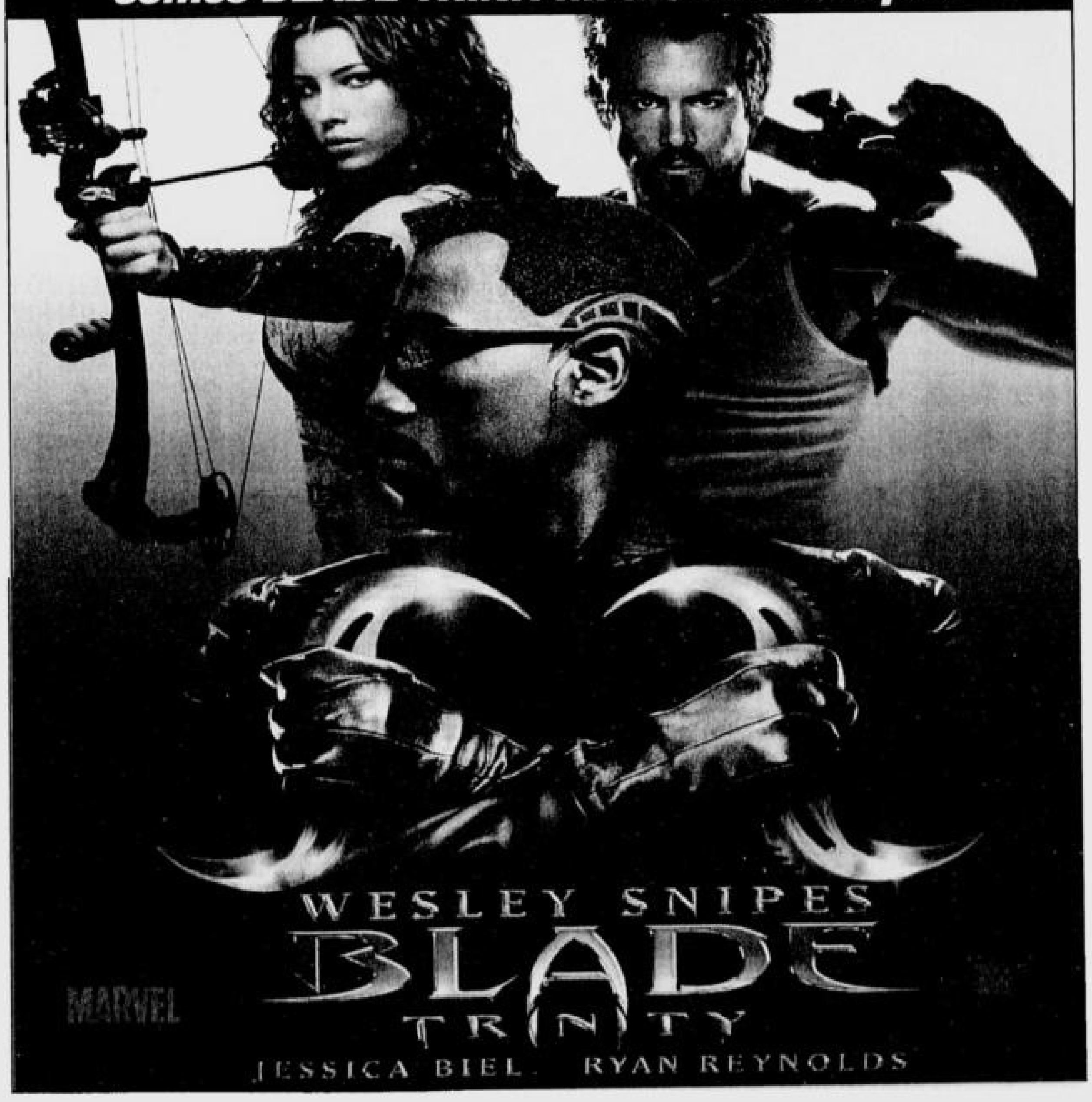

The color of outstanding Filipino filmmaking is 'kayumanggi'

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

IF YOU still haven't seen **Cesar Montano's** MMFF entry, "Panaghoy sa Suba," do go out of your way to catch it. You have better things to do? Think again:

We keep complaining that the Filipino movie industry produces mostly formulaic, commercial, soul-less quickies and sleazies—but, when a good, soul-full film comes along, we don't patronize it. What does that say about our intellectual dishonesty? A lot.

Filipino movies are sometimes bad because we, the audience, are shallow. We have good filmmakers, but not enough good movie appreciators. To really improve local movies, we must first raise the level—not of our filmmakers—but of our audience.

A shocking statement? Well, there it is.

Trouble is, there are too few good film appreciation courses and workshops being conducted. And the Philippine educational system as a whole leaves a lot to be desired.

So, our good filmmakers' best efforts are generally not supported by a sufficient number of viewers for them to make enough money to continue producing exceptional films.

Is there a way out of this perfect formula for failure? There is:

Once in a while, a good movie like "Tanging Yaman" and "Jose Rizal" becomes a big hit, and thus effectively proves that more than enough viewers can be motivated to patronize quality productions—*if* their approach is astute.

With "Jose Rizal," the unique selling proposition was the fact that the film was about the national hero, so many schools assigned it to their students, thus beefing up its viewership to hit proportions.

For its part, "Tanging Yaman" clicked with the mass film audience because it was about a family and had three generations of actors in its cast.

What about "Panaghoy sa Suba"? What about it could be uniquely appealing to Filipino viewers? At first glance, its slow, meditative pace could work against it, since today's viewers like their movies fast and eventful.

But there's something else about the movie that's enormously appealing to me, and I hope I can influence other viewers to appreciate it: It's the first movie I've seen in a long time that looks truly, Filipino. The actors' look is *kayumanggi*, and that to me is a real blessing, after all the pale, *tisoy* types we see in most of our movies.

All by its lonesome, Montano's film is a great antidote to the colonial mentality that prevents us from really coming into our own as a people.

Also, the film chooses locations that vivify the natural beauty and richness, not just of the Philippine landscape, but of the Filipino soul itself.

While watching the film, I felt ennobled, brought back to my essence, and *affirmed* in my being Filipino. Yes, I'm *tisoy* myself, but the movie helped me get in touch with the less adulterated part of my psyche, and I found the experience most rewarding. I wish you could savor it as well.

There's lots more that can be said about the movie's other virtues *and* flaws, but I want to focus here only on its Filipinoness, so you can appreciate it for yourself by watching the film even after the MMFF has concluded its run.

With "Panaghoy sa Suba," the color of good Filipino filmmaking is *kayumanggi*. And that's a return to the important basics that's truly worth celebrating.

MONTANO

At Ipanema

ENTERTAINERS at Ipanema Bar and Restaurant at Eastwood, Libis (421-7764) include: Tuesday, **John Francis** with the Precision Band. Wednesday, **Sticker Happy**. Thursday, **Jaycie and Honey**. Friday and Saturday, R&B Dance Party with DJs **Mike and Sonny**.

Films for 2005

MOVIES to watch out for during the first quarter of Film Year 2005 include:

"Closer." A top contender in the upcoming Oscars, this is the story of four strangers (**Julia Roberts, Jude Law, Natalie Portman** and **Clive Owen**)—their chance meetings, instant attraction, and casual betrayals.

"Hitch." Will Smith stars as a professional matchmaker whose program is threatened by a female journalist (**Eva Mendes**) who pretends to be a student so she can publish an exposé on his fraudulent methods.

"Spanglish." Cultures collide as Flor (**Paz Vega**), a beautiful Mexican woman, and her 12-year-old daughter move in with an affluent Los Angeles family (**Adam Sandler, Tea Leoni**). Written and directed by **James L. Brooks.**

"Stealth." Deeply ensconced in a top-secret military program, three pilots (**Josh Lucas, Jamie Foxx, Jessica Biel**) struggle to bring an artificial intelligence program under control—before it initiates the next world war!

TOP GROSSER!
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NADINE SAMONTE AND OYO BOY SOTTO
Enteng Kabisote
OKAY KA FAIRY KO... THE LEGEND
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DOLBY
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BEST PICTURE
BEST ACTRESS - Vilma Santos
BEST ACTOR - Christopher de Leon
BEST STORY
BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN
BEST THEME SONG - "PAGBIGYAN ANG PUSO KO"
sung by Karylle & Jerome John Hughes
VILMA SANTOS
CHRISTOPHER DE LEON
SHERYL CRUZ
JAY MANALO
EDDIE GARCIA
PATRICK GARCIA
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BEST CHILD PERFORMER - Ella Guevara
jomari yllana
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richard gutierrez
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pelikula ni yam laranas
ronnie lazaro
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3RD BEST PICTURE
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR - Dennis Trillo
GENDER SENSITIVITY AWARD
RAYMART SANTIAGO
JAY MANALO
DENNIS TRILLO
ANITA LINDA
Ms. JACLYN JOSE
ANGELU DE LEON
T.J. TRINIDAD
IYA VILLANIA
MARCO ALCARAZ
YASMIEN KURDI
AND JUDY ANN SANTOS
AISHITE IMASU
A FILM BY JOEL LAMANGAN, DGPI
MAHAL KITA
1941
EXTENDED!
Text 1941 to 2346
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2004

PINAKA MASAYANG PELIKULA NGAYON!
SO...HAPPY, HAPPY KAYONG LALABAS NG SINEHAN!
PANOORIN NA'T MAGSALU-SALO SA KATATAWA!
eric quizon
tonton gutierrez
nova villa
cogie domingo
and gloria diaz
introducing jay-r
and
jennylyn mercado
mark herras
yasmien kurdi
rainier castillo
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A roster of offerings at Dusit Hotel Nikko

START the year at Dusit Hotel Nikko as it welcomes the year of the rooster with a roster of food promotions.

At Benjarong Thai restaurant, it is the turn of Chef Tun, Benjarong's Thai Chef, to recommend and offer diners the "Chef's Specials" hot and straight from the cooking pan. Savor the five ala carte dishes for lunch and dinner—Prawns and Glass Noodles in Hot Pot, Stir-fried Noodles with Chicken and Vegetables, Combination of Seafood Salad, Steamed Stuffed Squid with Minced Shrimp and Chunk Tuna Fried Rice with Basil Leaves and Vegetables, available from Jan. 17 to 31.

For a complete meal yet affordable, the authentic Vietnamese restaurant— Thien Duong—offers the executives set menus from Jan. 10 to 31. Choose from the two set meals offered for lunch and dinner and priced at P700++ and P750++ per person.

Guests just kept clamoring for more, that is why Benkay Japanese restaurant is extending its "Nabe Kaiseki" (Hot Pot Fair) promotion from Jan. 5 to 31. On the menu are Gyokai No Shabu-Shabu, Ishikari-Nabe, Udon-Suki and Benkay Nabe. Prices range from P940.00++ to P1,100.00++.

Lovers of grill dishes can enjoy the Café's "Hot off the Grill" promotion where one can savor grilled meats and seafoods from Jan. 5 to 31 offered ala carte for lunch and dinner. On the menu are Grilled Rib-Eye Steak, Grilled Double Lamb Chops, Grilled marinated Chicken Breast, Grilled Salmon Steak with Lemon Peel and Grilled Marinated Lapu-Lapu. Each choice is served with either red or white wine.

And if you feel like having lunch or dinner with a twist, try Fiesta San Miguel's "Sinigang Festival". Sinigang, as we all know, is one of the popular and favorite dishes of not only Filipinos but foreign guests as well. Seduce your palate with the irresistible Sinigang from Jan. 1 to 31. Diners may choose from among the available sour broth—Miso, Bayabas, Kamatis or Sampalok.

For queries or reservations, call Dusit Hotel Nikko at 867-3333. (Special thanks to Joaillier Fine Jewelry Shop for the photo of the rooster)

Sliding Hammers topbills Mandarin Oriental's Swedish Week

MANDARIN Oriental, Manila's Swedish week aptly billed "Distinctly Swedish" from Jan. 10 to 15 at the Captain's Bar will be featuring the Sliding Hammers Jazz Group— one of the best international finds in the recently concluded Rochester International Jazz Festival. The group is slated to perform during lunch on Monday, and dinner on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday, with their soothing, mainstream jazz music.

Presented by the Embassy of Sweden in association with Mandarin Oriental, Manila, Scandinavian Airlines System, and Ericsson, the week-long activity is a stimulating display of delightful and gustatory Swedish fare and jazz music.

The Sliding Hammers Jazz Group is a lively Swedish band led by two excellent sister trombonists Karin and Mimmi Hammar—known to be the undisputed queens of mainstream jazz and are regular fixtures in numerous jazz festivals today; together with pianist Mathias Algotsson; bassist Tommy Johnsson; drummer Ronnie Gardiner; and outstanding guest guitarist Andreas Pettersson.

Pettersson is one of the most outstanding guitarists Sweden has ever produced.

The culinary event will be offering lunch and dinner buffets from Monday to Wednesday, and lunch buffet only on Thursday and Friday at P 730++, and will showcase Sweden's fine old culinary tradition which consists of good old everyday food based on classic country cooking.

Some of the region's lavish and hearty homegrown specialities to be prepared by Swedish guest chef Andreas Balla will include Graved Lax with dill-mustard sauce; Swedish meatballs with cranberry sauce; Veal stew with dill; "Wallenbergsare" veal frikadelle; Nordic profiteroles with crème Bavaroise; "Biff a la Lindstrom" beef frikadelle with beetroot and capers; Poached cod in egg-parsley sauce; Swedish pancakes with strawberries and whipped cream; Swedish apple pie with vanilla sauce, among others.

For inquiries, call Captain's Bar at 750-8888 extensions 2417 and 2418.

A grand Sinulog weekend

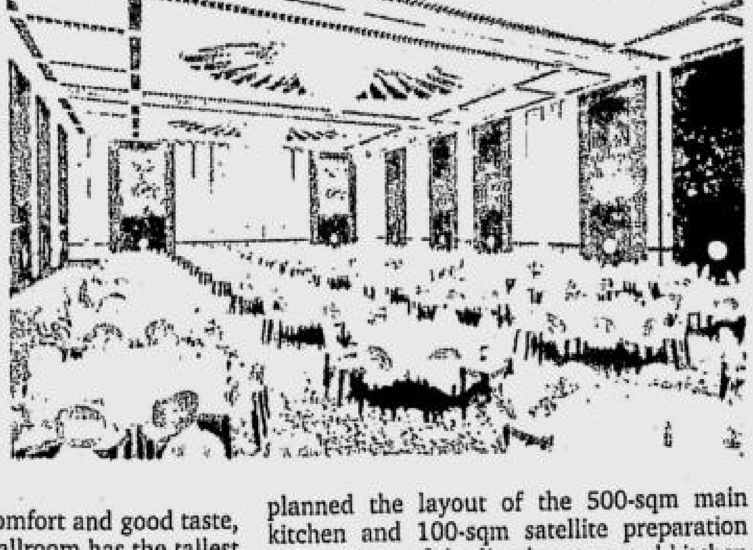
THE FIRST-EVER Sinulog parade in 1980 began the biggest spectacle in the country. A dance ritual in honor of the miraculous image of Sto. Nino that dates back prior to the arrival of Magellan in Cebu in 1521, Cebu City's Sinulog Festival draws revelers and participants from all over.

Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino is right at the center of the festivities. From Jan. 14 to 17, it offers the Sinulog Weekend Room Package. Cebu visitors as well as local residents can avail themselves of the Hotel's plush Ambassador Room for P3,500 net, a Deluxe Suite for P6,800 net, or an Executive Suite for P9,000 net. Prices apply to both single or double occupancy.

The Sinulog Weekend Package includes daily breakfast buffet for two at Café Uno, a complimentary round of a cocktail or a glass of wine at the Treff Bar, a special rate on IDD calls, complimentary use of the swimming pool, complimentary entrance to the Casino Filipino, and 10 percent discount on all Hotel-owned restaurants. An extra bed is priced at only P1,200 net per night, plus, a late check-out privilege until 3 p.m.

For inquiries, call (032) 2326888 local 8107 to 8109 and 8132 or Manila sales and reservations office at 687-0888, or log on to www.waterfronthotels.net

Setting the standard in ballrooms



THE PEOPLE behind the newest and most modern structure to rise south of Metro Manila, The Bellevue Grand Ballroom, elevates entertaining to a higher art form. Envisioned to be the "ultimate concert venue of the South," the ultra-modern yet ultra-chic edifice slated to open this month has a two-story structure and can accommodate a maximum of 1,000 guests.

Furnished to the highest standards of comfort and good taste, the Oriental-themed ballroom has the tallest ceiling height in the country, with partitions reaching up to 8 meters. State-of-the-art sound and lighting systems can be configured precisely to the needs of the occasion, just with the push of a button. The brilliance of this outstanding room is showcased by its versatility. A wide variety of lighting styles are available to achieve the desired mood. A high-end projection system built into the walls and ceilings of the room has remote connection panels and large motorized screens, eliminating unsightly projector machines and wires that take up space and spoil the ambiance.

A kitchen design consultant carefully planned the layout of the 500-sqm main kitchen and 100-sqm satellite preparation kitchen. Top-of-the-line banquet and kitchen equipment are the same brands used by five-star hotels around the world.

Still, the core of its operations lies in its people. "The Bellevue Grand Ballroom's most important asset is its banquet staff. After interviewing over 100 banquet personnel, those selected undergo a three-week extensive training. Those who will pass this extensive training will still be categorized based on competence, efficiency, and work values that epitomizes The Bellevue standard of excellent service," The Bellevue Manila general manager Cyndy Tan Jarabata emphasizes. For inquiries, call 771-8181.

Nilaga na masarap
pero walang hirap.
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FRIDAY,
JANUARY 7, 2005

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

A2-1

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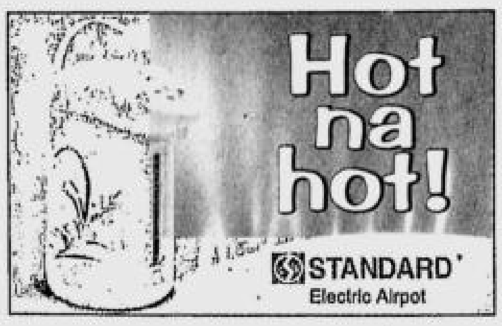

From 'Seventh Heaven' to topless pictorial

WOW. As the sexy amazon in "Blade: Trinity"

By Janet Susan R. Nepales
LA Correspondent

LOS ANGELES—"I was completely taken advantage of ... that is the truth," laments sexy actress Jessica Biel.

It seems the 22-year-old, voted by People Magazine as one of the 50 Most Beautiful People in 1999, still can't shake off the repercussions of a topless pictorial she did for Gear magazine's March 2000 issue.

She reveals that it "embarrassed my entire family and me. It just got totally blown out of proportion."

When she posed for those photographs wearing only undies and a pair of high-heeled shoes, she says, she was just a young girl following the photographer's instructions.

"So I was going like, 'Okay, Mr. Photographer, if that's what you say you need, I'll do that.' But when I saw the finished product, I was shocked. To think that I just wanted to change my image and show a different side of myself other than what people saw in 'Seventh Heaven.'"

Speaking of image change, Biel portrays a vampire hunter in the forthcoming Wesley Snipes action-adventure movie, "Blade: Trinity." As Mary Camden in "Seventh Heaven" says, a made-for-TV Warner Bros. Network production, she was the "good girl/cheerleader" type.

FROM/ A2-2

As TV's Maria Camden

Sexy actress Jessica Biel sobs: 'Everything got out of hand'

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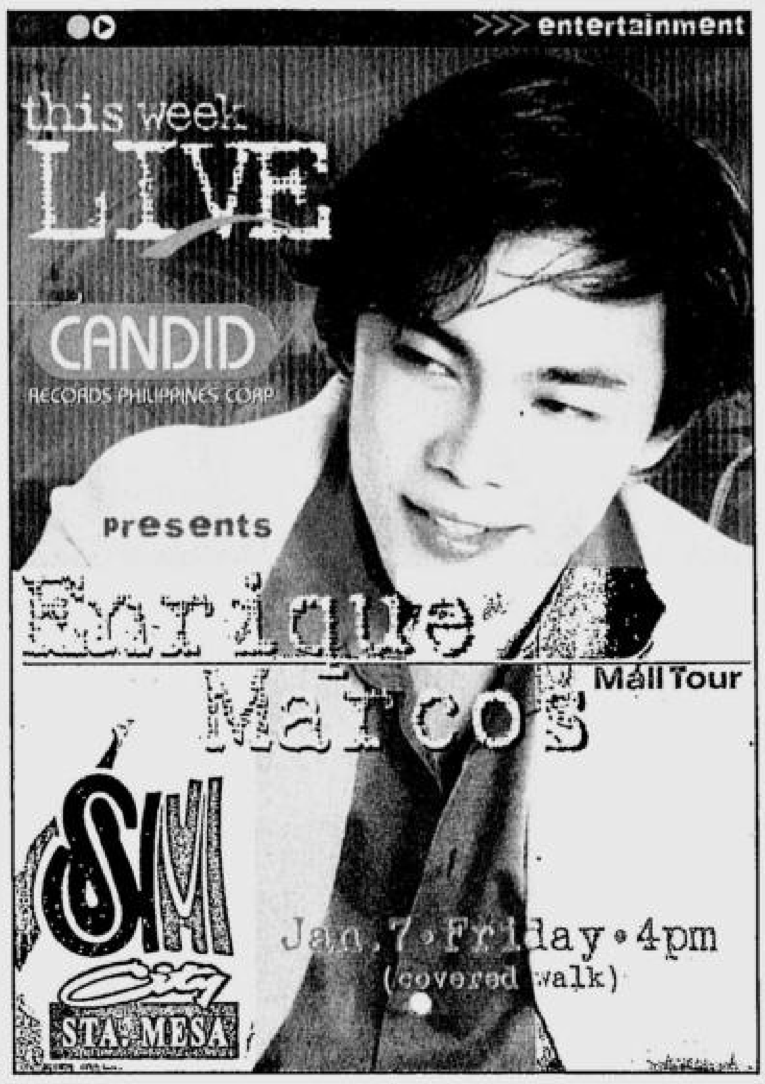
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TV GUIDE
Friday, January 7, 2005
4:00 pm
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10:00 pm
PBA
ABC Iba tayo
Secrets with Juliana Palermo
ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Get Backers	Ragnarok	Masked Rider Ryuki	TV Patrol	Spirits	Krystala	Lovers In Paris	Hiram	Star Circle National Teen Quest	Star Circle Nat'l Teen Quest Elimn Special			Insider	Private I
NBN	Value Vision	Value Vision		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision		Gold & Glory In Greece	The Working President	Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Muszoni Cup 2003				Ugnayang Pambansa	
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	PBA Game-Bol	PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	Secrets	TNA Impact		Billboard On-Air
GMA 7	Leya (2:45 PM)	Joyride (3:15 PM)	Snow Angel (3:45 PM)		One Piece	Witch Hunter Robin	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin	Starstruck (8:45 PM)	Forever In My Heart (9:15 PM)		Bubble Gang			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	Just For Laughs	Enterprise		Monk		Dead Zone		Newswatch Now			
IBC 13		Japan Video Topic		EZ Shop		IBC Express Balita		Home Shopping Network		Celebrity Dat Com		Global Family Series		D.E.N.R.		GMA The Working Pres	IBC News Tonite	GMA The Working President	
Solar		WWE Velocity		Thunder Box		Restol	Ozzy & Drix	Mucha Lucha!	Avengers	Deep Space Nine		WWE Smackdown				WWE Velocity		Wow	
Nickelodeon	Dora, The Explorer	Little Bear	Blues Clues	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Brother's Garcia	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	All That	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	Rocket Power	The Wild Thornberrys	The Brother's Garcia
MYX		Urban MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Star MYX	Club MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		What I Like About You	JKX	The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	Will & Grace	What I Like About You	Iron Chef		Star Search		Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Blind Date	Fifth Wheel
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AXN								Gensomaden Saiyuki	Gensomaden Saiyuki	7 Days		The Right Stuff II	Rated X	Cold Squad					
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	TNA Wrestling/ The Three Tenors In The Forbidden City		Stupid Behavior Caught On Tape	When Hidden Cameras Attack	Ultimate Force		Friends	Stupid Behavior Caught On Tape
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	NG Sea		Nat'l Geographic Amazing Moments		When Natural Disasters Strike Back		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr. Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		NG Sea		Weather Gone Mad	Seismic Seconds
Solar Sports					Sounds of the Finals														
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Ming's Quest	Revisited With Jules Asner		New York Nick	Guess Who's Coming To Decorate					
HBO				Possession			The Next Karate Kid (5:45 PM)				Wishmaster: The Prophecy Fulfilled			Raiders Of The Lost Ark				Twister (10:55PM)	
Star Movies	Tequila Express	Not Afraid, Not Afraid			Moonlight Mile				Cruel Intentions (7:25 PM)			Santa Clause 2			Death Becomes Her (10:40PM)				
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	TBA		Premiere	Toon Pick		Yu-Gi-Oh!	Zoids: Fuzors	The Looney Tunes Show	Mucha Lucha!	Codename: Kids Next Door	Justice League		Aqua Teen (11:15PM)	Yu-Gi-Oh!
Disney Channel	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Lizzie Mcguire	Even Stevens	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	The Legend Of Tarzan	Lilo & Stitch/Un-talkative Bunny	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax			Cinema Secrets II Ep 9: Animals Gone Wild	10,000 Black Men Named George			Breach Of Conduct			The Hard Way (7:15 PM)				Elmore Leonard's Gold Coast				Tough Luck (10:50PM)	
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	A Place Called Home				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Mysterious Ways		Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye		The King and Queen Of Moonlight Bay			The District (10:35PM)		Mysterious Ways (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Power Zone				Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Junkyard Wars		Mythbusters		Wild Discovery		Best Of Discovery			
MTV Philippines		Whatever Things		Non-Stop Hits		Non-Stop Hits	05 MAA Nominee Specials	MTV Get Spotted	MTV Loveline	Non-Stop Hits	Non-Stop Hits	MTV Brand New	Be Seen @ MTV			Newlyweds		VH1 Hits/Video Collection	
Sports Plus															NFL Gameday				
EWTN	Does The Church Still Teach That	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Stations Of The Cross	Image Of God	Faith Factory	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of The Angels Monastery	Search And Rescue	Your Call	EWTN Gallery	Life on The Rock Encore		Gospel Of Life In Health Care	Defending Life	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	Backstage	Father Corapi And The Catechism Of The Catholic Church	

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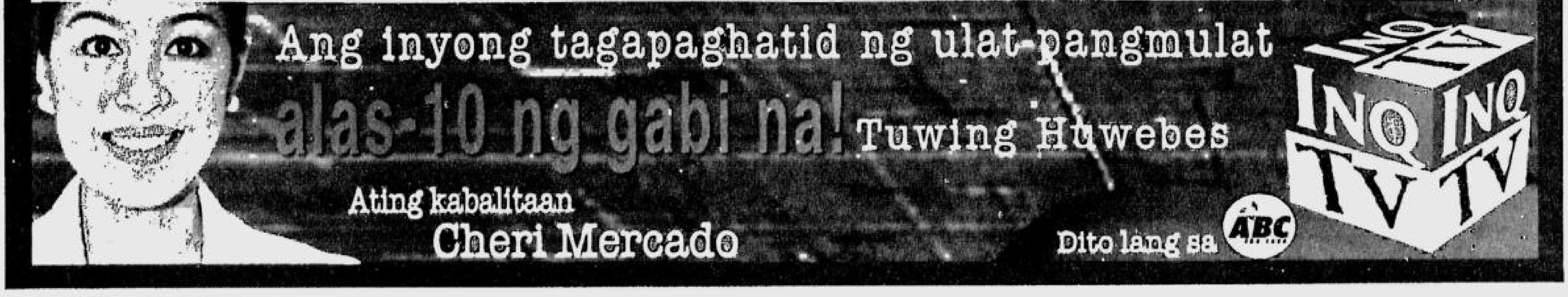

Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
alas-10 ng gabi na! Tuwing Huwebes
Ating kabalitaan
Cheri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

Show Biz Wish List 2005

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

WILL THE Year of the Wooden Rooster in show biz be something to crow about? Perhaps if some of these things will be on its agenda. Here's Dollywood's Show biz Wish List 2005:

1) Enough of girlie groups who have perfect vital stats but no I.Q.

2) Stars who answer questions in straight Tagalog than in "T.H" (trying hard) English or inane gay lingo.

3) Less emphasis on who's No. 1. That is always subject to change. More focus on who's consistently good.

4) Celebrities who try to be everything (host, singer, actor, dancer, producer, talent manager, director etc.) and spread themselves too thin.

5) A breather from talent search shows ad infinitum.

6) Ban nonsensical greetings on TV shows.

7) An end of Starlet Wars that are nothing but publicity stunts.

8) Goodbye to Ingrates and Sour Grapes.

9) No more hosts who monopolize the conversation and end up talking more than their guests do.

10) Newscasters spared from being news items.

11) Cut off too many hosts trying to out-talk each other in one show.

12) Stop self-serving segments in TV shows (what ever happened to subliminal advertising?)

13) A mellowing of shrill voices of some morning show hosts and the alarmist tone of some newscasters.

14) More Originality. Networks are oftentimes mere copycats of each other.

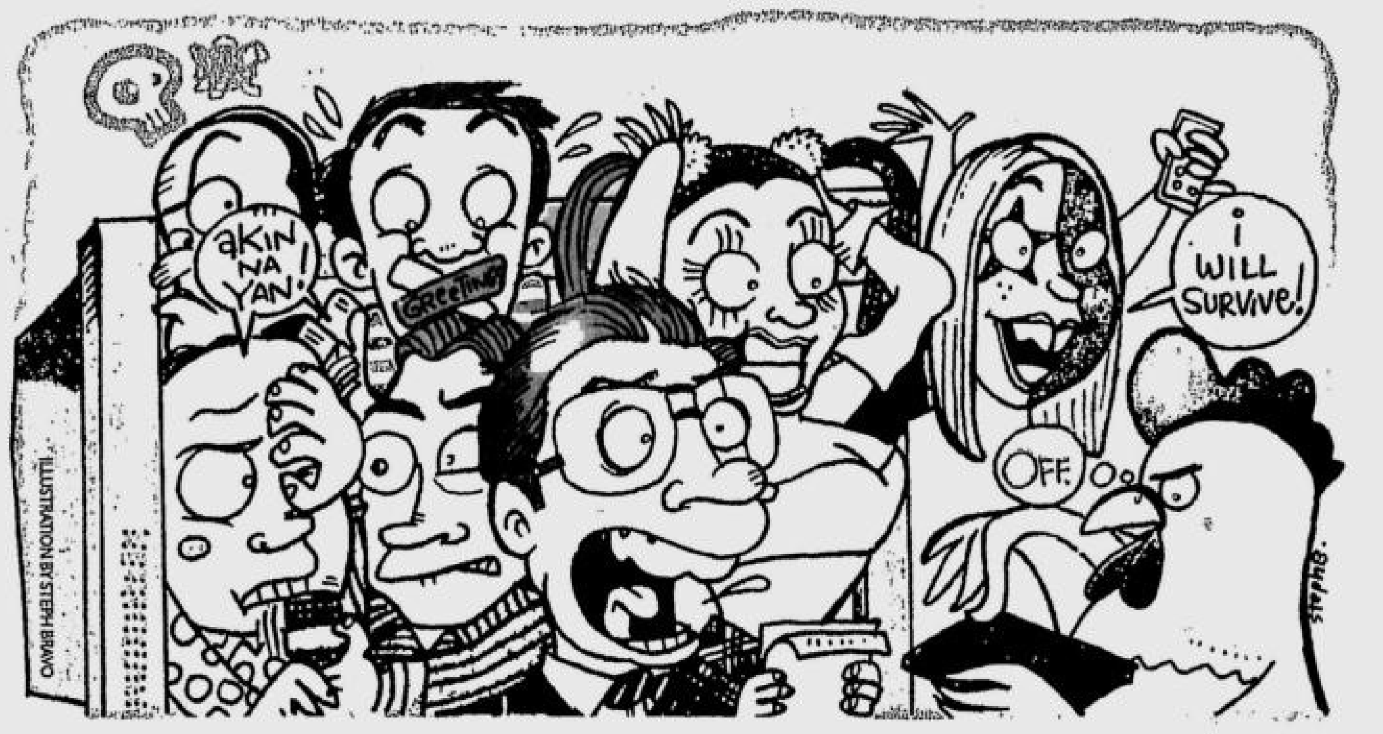
15) Down with the Star System. Nobody is indispensable!

Mano Po 3

ALTHOUGH **Vilma Santos** and **Boyet de Leon** both deserve their awards for "Mano Po 3," I've seen them in better performances. Their roles in the movie didn't really require much from them. But since they are such seasoned actors, Vi and Boyet still gave their all, even if being trapped in yet another Pinoy love triangle couldn't have been all that challenging for them.

'Isusumbong Kita!'

I CAUGHT the New Year's presentation of GMA 7's "Lagot Ka!..Isusumbong Kita!" Since **Richard Gomez** and **Joey Marquez** topbill the sitcom it kinda reminded me of their "Palibhasa Lalake" days. They go a long way back; that's why they are so at ease with each other. So much so that sometimes they forget where to draw the line between lines in the script and their adlibs. TV audiences may find the occasional slip of the tongue (or is it done on purpose?) amusing, but some private jokes are better left unaired.



Happy birthday, Sha!

AS A new year dawns, I remember my mom all the more. Those thoughts include her true friends who have touched my life as well. Just like **Sharon Cuneta**. Yesterday was the megastar's birthday, and I know that if my mom were still alive she would devote her entire radio program playing Sharon's songs and have an entire segment about Mega on her TV show. Of course my mom would also write about how special their friendship is in her column. Every time Jan. 6 comes around, I can almost hear my mom whisper to me "Tell Sha I love her." By now Mega knows that all too well but I can't reiterate it enough. I remember what my mom once wrote: "Sha . . . the mere mention of your name leaves me in awe."

For everything you have shared with my mom that only you and she know about . . . thank you, Sha! For everything you continue to share that only God and you know about ... thank you, Sha! You are heaven's gift to the world!!

(For feedback, e-mail wateringhole-shangrila@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com)

TOUGH GAL in action. That pushy photographer had better beware now.

From 'Seventh Heaven' to topless pictorial

VAMPIRE HUNTER. Straight to the point now

From page A2-1

Struggling out of the stereotype, she had "wanted to show that I was a little bit older, starting to become a woman, a little bit sexier. But everything got out of hand."

That fateful photo shoot turned out, for Biel, "probably one of the most difficult learning experiences of my entire life."

Before 'Heaven'

Born Jessica Claire Biel in Ely, Minnesota, and raised in Boulder, Colorado, Biel was "discovered" when she participated in a competition held by the International Modeling and Talent Association (IMTA).

"I was not even repped by any agency," she recalls. "I just did it for fun."

She caught the eye of an agent. Soon she had a manager, too, and before long, she was doing TV pilots. And then she landed the "Seventh Heaven" role.

Now based in Los Angeles, the 5-foot-8 tall, 130-pound actress admits that she has been something of a "tomboy" all her life. "I've always been into sports—soccer, rollerblading, ice skating, and mountain climbing. I love wearing jeans and sneakers. It's hard for me to put on makeup, wear a gown and attend premieres."

In her "Blade: Trinity" role, Biel plays Abigail, one of two deftly trained Nightstalkers, or human vampire hunters.

"I love the role because it is very physical," she gushes. "At the same time, it allows me to be feminine and sexy."

The movie is about the half-man, half-immortal Blade, who has fought vampires for years in the dark of night, but is now forced out into the daylight to join forces with The Nightstalkers (Biel and Ryan Reynolds as Hannibal).

"One thing I love about this movie is that I save Ryan twice instead of him saving me," she says. "He's the damsel in distress; that was fun."

Parents' influence

Asked about the greatest influences on her life, Biel quickly replies, "My parents. My father was an international business consultant who then went into his own business. He is incredibly dedicated and motivated, very organized and intelligent. My mom does everything at the last minute. She is a free spirit. She is a kind of hippie, the most wonderful woman, the most caring person in the world. I think I got a good mix. I am very orderly and neat. I get things scheduled but then, just like my mother, I am also kind of a free spirit."

She matured fast, she says, because she started hanging out with adults when she was 14. "They were my best friends. I worked with them every day. I talked to them. I joked around with them. I was always comfortable around people older than I was."

Though she is a TV celebrity herself, Biel gets starstruck, too. She says the best moment of her life was being seated at the same table during an event with the likes of Tom Cruise, Orlando Bloom, Susan Sarandon and Kirsten Dunst. "I couldn't believe it," she says. "I wanted to call my mother and say, 'Gosh, mom, I don't know what to do.' I ended up just pinching myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming."

Pearl Jam hits collection out

SONY Music Entertainment has released the first-ever Pearl Jam hits collection, "rearviewmirror (greatest hits 1991-2003)," on CD and tape.

The two-disc package contains an "Up Side" featuring the band's biggest anthems, including "Once," "Spin The Black Circle," and "Do the Evolution." The "Down Side" focuses on the group's more introspective side, with songs like "Black," "Nothingman," and "Wishlist."

Guitarist Stone Gossard and bassist Jeff Ament formed Pearl Jam in 1990 following the demise of their prior band, Mother Love Bone. Guitarist Mike McCready and singer Eddie Vedder soon joined, and drummer Dave Krusen completed the lineup (he would be the first of four drummers in succession—Dave Abbruzzese, Jack Irons and, currently, Matt Cameron).

The band debuted with "Ten" in 1991, which sported a number of radio hits, including "Jeremy," "Evenflow," "Once," "Alive," and "Black" (the latter three songs have been remixed for this collection by longtime Pearl Jam collaborator Brendan O'Brien).

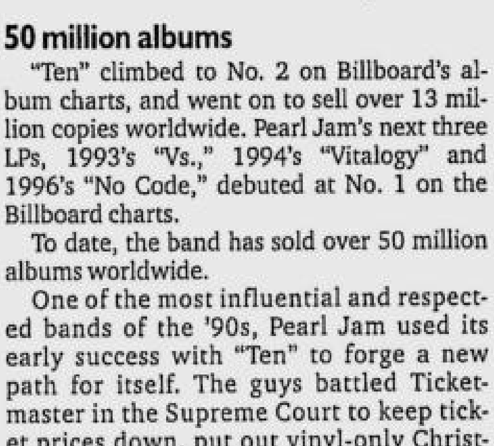
50 million albums

"Ten" climbed to No. 2 on Billboard's album charts, and went on to sell over 13 million copies worldwide. Pearl Jam's next three LPs, 1993's "Vs.," 1994's "Vitalogy" and 1996's "No Code," debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard charts.

To date, the band has sold over 50 million albums worldwide.

One of the most influential and respected bands of the '90s, Pearl Jam used its early success with "Ten" to forge a new path for itself. The guys battled Ticketmaster in the Supreme Court to keep ticket prices down, put out vinyl-only Christmas singles to fan club members, released official bootlegs of nearly all of their concerts since 2000.

They've only shot only one video in the past decade, the highly acclaimed Todd McFarlane-directed "Do The Evolution." Some of the band's biggest radio singles have been happy accidents: "Yellow Ledbetter" was originally released as a B-side, and the cover of J. Frank Wilson and The Cavaliers' "Last Kiss" was initially released as a fan club Christmas single and included on the "No Boundaries" benefit CD that raised $8.7 million for relief efforts in Kosovo. Both songs received extensive radio play as a result of popular demand from fans, and are included on "rearviewmirror."



PEARL JAM

Blake trial, week 2: 'He threw up twice'

BLAKE

LOS ANGELES—Actor Robert Blake's behavior seemed unnatural on the night his wife was shot to death, a witness testified at the "Baretta" star's murder trial on Tuesday.

Taking the witness stand to begin the second week of Blake's trial, Mary Beth Rennie said Blake pleaded loudly for help after the May 4, 2001, shooting outside a Los Angeles restaurant but would not go near his dying wife.

"He yelled so much about his wife, saying, 'She's hurt, she's bleeding,' and yet he stayed away," Rennie said. "If it was someone I loved, I would have been there more."

Prosecutors say Blake, 71, murdered 44-year-old Bonny Lee Bakley in his car after they dined at Vitello's, his favorite neighborhood Italian restaurant, because he wanted sole custody of their young daughter.

Bakley has been portrayed by both the prosecution and the defense as a con artist who was bent on marrying an actor.

Rennie said she came upon the murder scene after dining out at another restaurant with a doctor friend, but the two of them watched from a distance without ever offering to help.

Blake's attorney, Gerald Schwartzbach, suggested during cross-examination that if anyone's behavior was unusual it was that of Rennie's companion, Dr. James McCoy.

"Did you say anything to Dr. McCoy like, 'Hey, maybe they can use some medical assistance?'" Schwartzbach asked.

Rennie answered: "I thought it best to let him assess the situation. He was deep in thought."

Prosecutors say Blake threw up in the restaurant and on the street because, although he played many tough guys on TV and in the movies, his stomach was turned by the real-life experience of committing murder.

Vitello's co-owner, Steve Restivo, testified that in the hundreds of times that Blake visited the restaurant over the past 25 years, he never before saw vomit in the men's room.

However, Restivo testified for the defense that, before the murder, Blake was normal and upbeat. Restivo also helped the defense counter a suggestion that Blake parked down the street from Vitello's so that he wouldn't be seen killing his wife.

Restivo said that it wasn't the first time that Blake parked his car a couple of blocks down the street from the restaurant instead of in the customer parking lot.

"He'd say, 'No, I'd rather walk,'" Restivo testified. *Reuters*

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4 SIGAW
5

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3 SIGAW
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2 LASTIKMAN
3 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
4 MANO PO 3

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5 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
6 LASTIKMAN

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6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

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3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SIGAW
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
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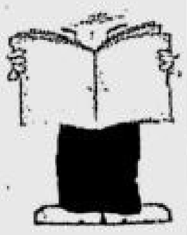
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1	OCEAN'S 12	KUNG FU HUSTLE	KUNG FU HUSTLE	BLADE: TRINITY	GUARANTEED SEATS BLADE: TRINITY	OCEAN'S 12
2	BLADE: TRINITY	OCEAN'S 12	OCEAN'S 12	OCEAN'S 12	GUARANTEED SEATS OCEAN'S 12	BLADE: TRINITY
3	KUNG FU HUSTLE	BLADE: TRINITY	GUARANTEED SEATS OCEAN'S 12		GUARANTEED SEATS HAPPY TOGETHER	ONE MISSED CALL
4	ENTENG KABISOTE	ENTENG KABISOTE	PANAGHOY SA SUBA		GUARANTEED SEATS MANO PO 3	HAPPY TOGETHER
5	HAPPY TOGETHER		SIGAW		GUARANTEED SEATS KUNG FU HUSTLE	
6			BLADE: TRINITY			
7			HAPPY TOGETHER			

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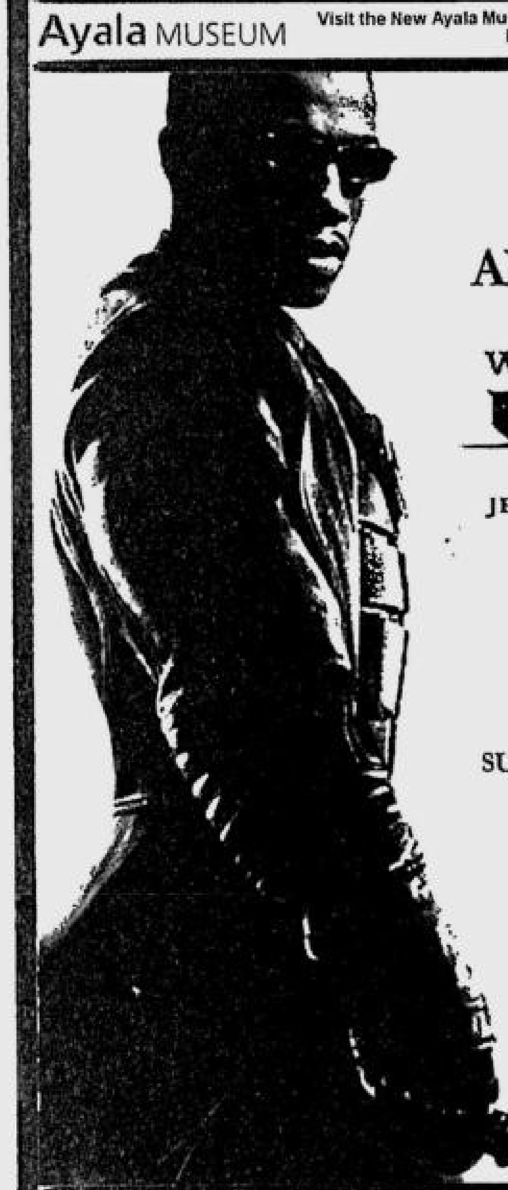
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Editor Raul O. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma

'04 investment registration up 220%

By Ronnel W. Domingo

INVESTMENTS approved by the Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza) were estimated to hit P180 billion last year, an increase of about 220 percent from the P56.7 billion posted in 2003.

Although the BOI has yet to release its official figures, the agency is expected to account for P137 billion, representing a 384-percent increase from the previous year's P28.3 billion.

Ecozone investments during the year were estimated to have reached P46.1 billion, or 62.5 percent higher than the previous year's P28.4 billion last year.

In another development, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said foreign direct investments from January to November last year amounted to $670 million.

Data from the Department of Trade and Industry showed that the power sector accounted for the biggest investment commitments last year.

These projects included GNPower Ltd.'s P96.52-billion combined cycle power plant that runs on liquefied natural gas and two of PNOC Energy Development Corp.'s geothermal projects—the P5.4-billion Negros project and the P2.58-billion Palinpinon 2 optimization project.

The biggest project, GNPower's proposed 1,200-megawatt power plant in Bataan, is a joint venture between Nauru-based Power Partners Ltd. and local firm PMR Ltd. Co.

In an interview, Trade Undersecretary Elmer C. Hernandez said that while the power sector was the main driver for investments in 2004, the manufacturing and services sectors also contributed significantly.

Hernandez, who is also the BOI's managing head, said manufacturing and services—including information technology projects—posted a growth rate of between 30 percent and 40 percent.

As of the first eleven months of 2004, about 69 percent of the total committed capital was earmarked for infrastructure projects in electricity, gas and water supply. *With a report from Doris Dumlao.*

GIR hit $16.05B in Dec.

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S gross international reserves hit $16.05 billion as of end-December, up by 1.1 percent from the end-November level but down by 4.8 percent from the end-2003 level of $16.86 billion.

In a press briefing, BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura yesterday said the yearend GIR exceeded the $14-$15 billion target for the full year and was adequate to cover about 4.1 months of imports of goods as well as payments of services and income.

Some $156 million in deposits made by the national government with the BSP, representing proceeds from its program and project loans, boosted the end-December reserves.

Also, $21 million in investment income on the BSP's placements abroad came in.

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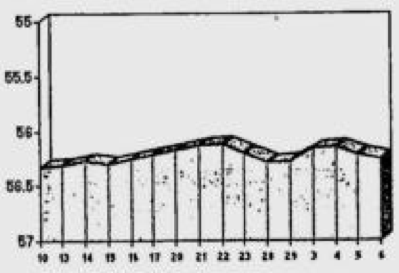


DECEMBER JANUARY

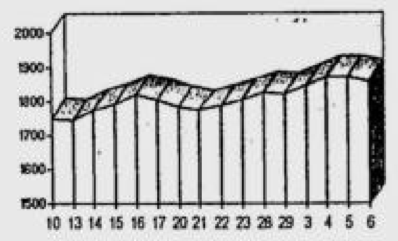
₱ 56.255 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 6, 2005

¥ 104.59 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 6, 2004

GOLD: $ 426.00-426.50
per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 6, 2005

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks down

SHARE prices yesterday closed 0.83 percent lower as concerns over the latest inflation figures sparked profit-taking on recent gains, dealers said.

They said the market also took a breather following recent sharp gains that brought the key index to its best finish in nearly five years, against the backdrop of weakness in major markets elsewhere in the world.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index fell 15.57 points to 1,859.80 after moving between 1,854.29 and 1,879.20.

Volume reached 958.78 million shares worth P1.01 billion from 1.15 billion shares valued at P1.4 billion on Wednesday.

The broader all-shares index fell 4.09 points to 1,169.58.

Losers led gainers 44 to 23, with 48 stocks unchanged. *AFP*

Fitch downgrades 3 banks

HONG KONG/SINGAPORE—Fitch Ratings has taken a number of ratings actions on five Philippine banks.

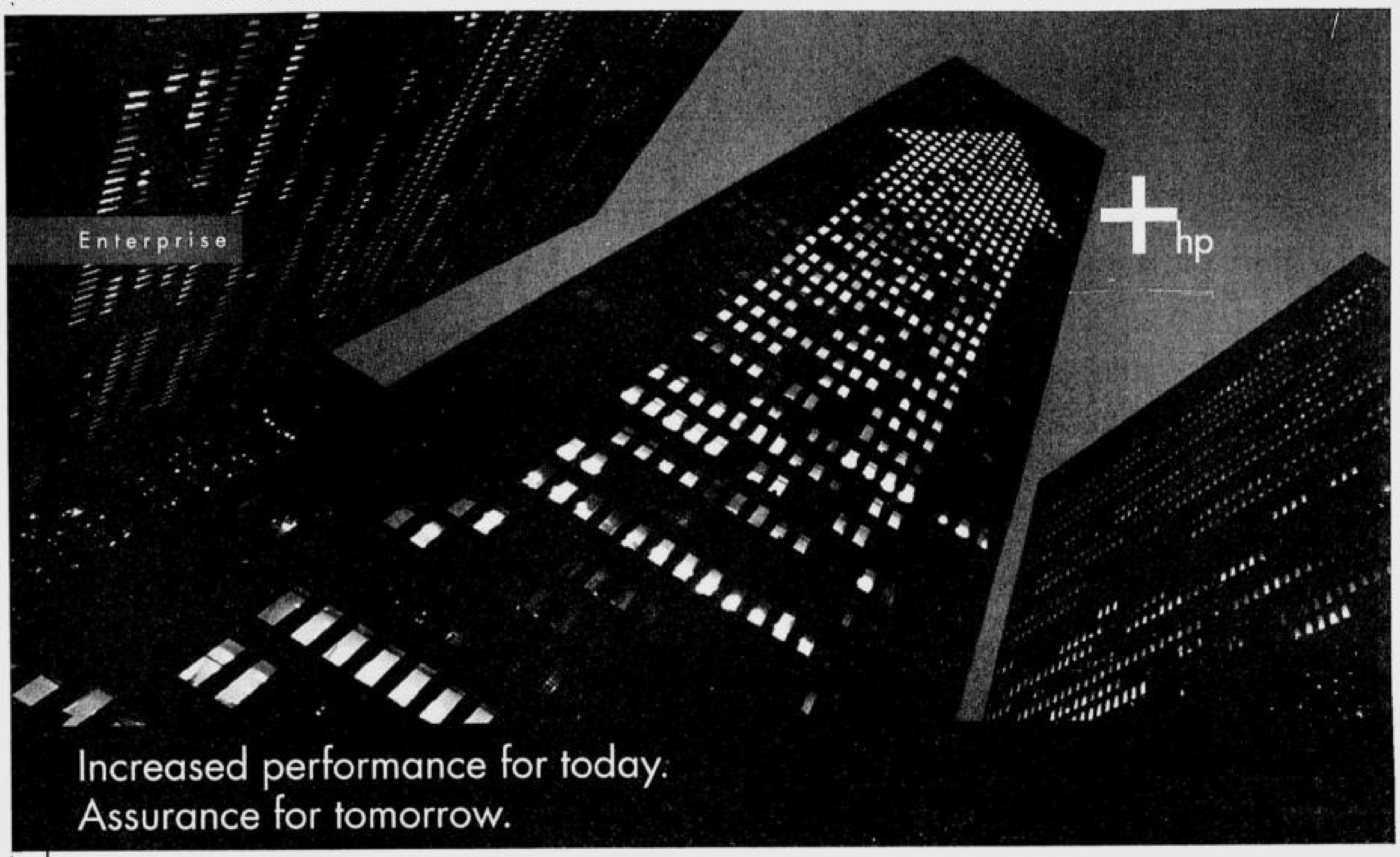
The actions were based on the negative outlook recently placed upon the Philippine sovereign's 'BB' Long-term foreign currency rating and other concerns regarding the banks as per Fitch's just-published report "A Worrisome Outlook: Impact on Capital as Banks Crystallise Losses on Bad Assets." The rating actions are as follow: Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. : Long-term foreign currency rating downgraded to 'BB-' (BB minus) with a negative outlook from 'BB' with a stable outlook, individual rating downgraded to 'D/E' from 'D,' short-term foreign currency rating affirmed at 'B' and support rating affirmed at '3.'

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.: Individual rating downgraded to 'D/E' from 'D,' long-term foreign currency rating of 'BB-' (BB minus) placed on negative outlook, long-term local currency rating affirmed at 'BB-' (BB minus), and support rating affirmed at '3.'

Philippine National Bank: Individual rating downgraded to 'E' from 'D/E,' support rating affirmed at '3.'

Equitable-PCI Bank: Long-term foreign currency rating of 'BB' placed on Negative Outlook, Short-term foreign currency rating affirmed at 'B,' support rating affirmed at '3' and Individual rating affirmed at 'D.'

Security Bank Corp.: Long-term foreign currency rating of 'BB' placed on negative outlook, short-term foreign currency rating affirmed at 'B,' long-term local currency rating affirmed at 'BB,' support rating affirmed at '4' and individual rating affirmed at 'D.' *Reuters*



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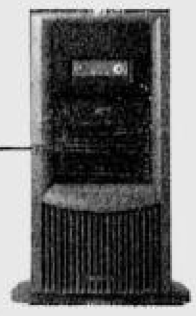

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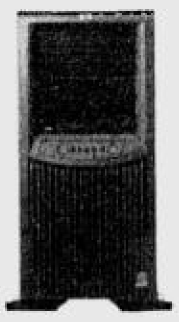

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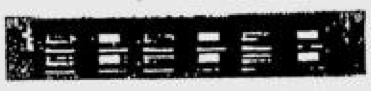

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RP confident inflation will be tamed

INFLATION in the Philippines is expected to ease in the coming months after exceeding government targets and hitting an average of 6 percent last year, President Macapagal-Arroyo's spokesperson yesterday said.

"The government is exerting all efforts to lessen the impact of inflation, especially on the prices of basic commodities," Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

"We expect some relief to come as oil prices abate and supply disruptions caused by recent calamities are resolved," he added, citing recent reductions in retail fuel prices and the clearing of roads blocked by landslides last year, which eased transport costs.

Inflation rate for 2004 hit 6 percent, exceeding government forecasts. Consumer prices in December alone rose 8.6 percent. Officials and economists widely blamed this on the sharp rise in fuel prices last year and an upturn in food costs.

Rafael Buenaventura, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas governor, on Wednesday said that despite the rise in inflation, he did not believe that any "policy action" was needed to address the issue.

However, Buenaventura did concede that with expected further increases in US interest rates and the possibility of some demand-driven price pressures being felt by next month, "there may be some measured action on our part." *With reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr., AFP*

Neda reduces RP export growth target

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority said that the country's exports this year could experience a growth slowdown, partly because of the phaseout of the quota system for garments that is feared to hit the country's second-biggest export earner.

According to Neda, export growth for 2005 will hit 8 percent. The figure is lower than the 10-percent growth for 2004, and government's official target of 12.8 percent.

As of Dec. 14, the 2004 earnings of garments exporters stood at $2.628 billion. The figure was higher than the $2.626 billion recorded in 2003.

The quota system benefited Filipino garments exporters because it gave them assured markets, such as the United States and Europe. But with its lifting, the Philippines will have to contend with countries like China and India.

Neda officials said the quota phaseout would make it necessary for Filipino garments makers to shift to high-end types of clothing to avoid stiff competition with Chinese manufacturers, who turn out cheap garments. *Michelle V. Remo*

Public sector debt down by ₱1.5T

By Michelle V. Remo

THE ONGOING re-computation of the country's public sector debt, which is being done to rectify the previous double-counting of some borrowing items, has trimmed down the debt figure by P1.56 trillion as of end-2003.

The 2003 public sector debt now stands at P4.349 trillion, compared with the earlier reported P5.9 trillion. Of the amount, P2.949 trillion came from foreign sources, while P1.4 trillion were sourced domestically.

This means that while the old 2003 debt figure was recorded at 137 percent of the gross domestic product, the debt-to-GDP ratio now stands at a lower figure of only 101 percent.

Public sector debt is the combined liabilities of the national government, local government units (LGUs), the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), government financial institutions (GFIs) and social security institutions (SSIs).

But the Department of Finance has said that the latest debt figure would still slightly increase, as it has yet to include the debts of the financial sector, which covers GFIs and the BSP. Debts of the financial sector are the ones the DOF is still re-computing.

The latest debt figure of P4.349 trillion reflects only the debts of the non-financial sector, which covers the national government, LGUs, GOCCs and SSIs.

But even if the debts of the financial sector were included in the debt figure, it would still be much lower than the earlier reported P5.9 trillion. According to earlier estimates the final debt figure would be lower by around P1 trillion.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong said that the re-computation of the public sector debt would force the government to adjust its medium-term targets for the fiscal sector.

"The 90 percent (debt-to-GDP ratio) target for the medium term has to be adjusted to a lower figure," she said.

Another finance official earlier said the resulting lower debt figure could help improve the image of the Philippines' fiscal sector, and therefore ease pressures that weigh down on its credit rating.

The DOF is now using international reporting standards, which the International Monetary Fund had proposed. The move to recalculate the debt figure came after IMF representatives visited the country last year to introduce the international standards for financial reporting to local finance officials.

COMMENTARY

Campaign promises

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

IT WAS a rude awakening for the thousands of coconut farmers aligned with the Alyansa Agrikultura. The joy and hope of the first day of the year turned to gloom and anger the very next day.

On Jan. 2, it was reported that Malacañang had hinted of a plan to sell the government's 27-percent interest in San Miguel Corp. The stake, representing shares in the coconut levy, would be used to raise funds for the cash-strapped government. Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye was quoted to have said that "the Sandiganbayan decision affirming the government ownership of the 27 percent coconut fund should further strengthen our fiscal position."

The report may have been inaccurate. Secretary Bunye may have been misquoted or quoted out of context. But this position may have been floated as a trial balloon without informing the President. What makes this matter worse is that this position may be perceived as a betrayal of a campaign promise the President made during the 2004 elections.

Background

Three months before the elections, the Alyansa Agrikultura, a farmer-fisherfolk coalition composed of 39 national and local federations, presented a two-page agriculture agenda to all the presidential candidates. This was the result of a year-long round of consultations. The leaders collectively decided that, instead of waiting for the presidential candidates to come up with his or her own agriculture program, the Alyansa officials would present their own agriculture agenda for each candidate to consider. The leaders would throw their support behind the candidate who would adopt the Alyansa agenda.

This agenda highlighted six key items. One of the items prescribed that the coco levy shares should be used for the benefit of the 1.4 million small coconut farmers and farm workers. Not all the presidential candidates agreed to this. But President Macapagal-Arroyo did.

Now, the coconut farmers and farm workers are hoping that the reported cordon sanitaire around the President would not affect her will to carry out her campaign promise.

History

There is a long history behind the betrayal of the coconut industry. In 1934, a law was passed imposing an excise tax on coconut oil from the Philippines. The tax rate was over 100 percent of the value of the product. President Quezon persuaded the Americans to make a partial refund of these taxes. However, the refund agreement had a condition that none of the funds would be extended to help the coconut industry.

Later, the fund accounted for 40 percent of the post-war rehabilitation. Some of the money went to develop Quezon City, with the construction of the Legislative building, roads and schools. The fund was also used to put up sugar mills. Though the refund stopped in 1946, the tax continued until 1966.

"It is lamentable that, from 1934 to 1966, not a single centavo went to coconut farmers who made this all possible," said Joey Faustino, executive director of the Coconut Industry Reform Movement Inc. (COIR).

Coconut levy

During martial law, the coconut levy was imposed. From the original amount of P9 billion, the coco levy fund ballooned to almost P100 billion.

"Once again, the funds made possible by the hard work of the coconut farmers were not used for them," said Vicente Fabe, chair of Pakisama, the largest farmer organization today. "Instead, others benefited, such as a sugar mill and a ranch that have no relationship to coconut farmers. It is time that the coconut farmers finally benefit from the coco levy."

Last Dec. 28, the Sandiganbayan upheld the government's claim to the SMC shares acquired through the coconut levy. This decision paved the way for the government to sell these shares.

The coconut farmers fear that history might repeat itself. The proceeds from the sale of the shares may not go to the coconut farmers. Instead, it may be used to address the fiscal deficit.

Reform or perish

When the Alyansa Agrikultura drew up its proposed common agriculture agenda for the presidential candidates to respond to, some skeptical farmer leaders felt it might be a waste of time.

"All the candidates will agree with our six key positions just to get our votes," according to one leader. "But once a candidate wins, having successfully fooled us to get our support, he or she will conveniently forget the campaign promises made and once again exploit us."

The leader was wrong when he said that all the candidates would agree on the issue of the coconut levy being for the small coconut farmers. When the Alyansa Agrikultura published the position of one candidate who did not agree on this issue, that candidate lost a large number of votes.

The second part of the leader's statement is now in question. The current administration should be commended for upholding the government's claim to the SMC shares after many years of indecision. But the recent announcement that the government is contemplating the sale of these shares to address the fiscal deficit has upset the coconut farmers.

If the long sought reform for the proper use of the coconut levy fund is not carried out, Ms Arroyo's statement to "reform or perish" may actually occur.

(The author is chair of Agriwatch, a private sector initiative; former undersecretary of agriculture and trade and industry, and former chair and Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agriwatch-phil@yahoo.com or telefax 02-8516635.)

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 6, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.8	375,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	27	27	26.5	26.5	2,025,900
Bank of the Phil. Islands	53	53.5	53	53.5	70,100
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	47.5	47.5	47.5	47.5	6,900
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	10,000
International Exch. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	466,600
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26.5	26.5	26	26.5	1,345,600
Prudential Bank	350	350	350	350	520
Philippine National Bank	22.5	22.5	22.5	22.5	1,000
Security Bank Corp.	29.5	29.5	29.5	29.5	15,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	23.75	24	23.75	24	63,900
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	195	195	195	195	150
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	34,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	108	108	108	108	330
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1835	1835	1830	1835	180
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18.5	18.5	18.25	18.25	31,900
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.76	1.76	4,207,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	955	955	945	950	24,570
Ipeople Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.15	3.15	106,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	2.85	2.85	2.8	2.85	18,602,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1370	1370	1355	1355	272,360
Ivantage Corp.	0.62	0.62	0.61	0.61	1,060,000
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	37,300,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	16	16	15.5	15.75	154,700
Manila Electric Co. B	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	201,700
Petron Corp.	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.2	1,629,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44	5,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	37,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	490,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	44,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.36	0.36	620,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	50,000
Republic Cement Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	80,000
Union Cement Corp.	2.24	2.46	2.24	2.44	16,949,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.95	2.95	2.9	2.9	506,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	31	31	30.5	30.5	77,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28.5	28.5	28	28	15,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	20,000
San Miguel Corp. A	59.5	59.5	59	59.5	163,000
San Miguel Corp. B	79	80	79	80	55,600
Phil Tob Flue Cur & Redry	11	11	11	11	4,800
Universal Robina Corp.	9.6	9.6	9.6	9.6	1,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	450,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	6.9	7.1	6.9	7	12,286,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.2	3.25	3.2	3.25	699,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.58	1.58	1.52	1.52	775,000
APC Group Inc.	0.09	0.09	0.0875	0.09	900,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	16,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	100,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	500
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.69	8,910,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.14	0.16	0.14	0.16	4,910,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	50,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.135	0.155	0.135	0.15	11,360,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.55	3.6	2,306,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1	1	1	1	479,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	5.4	5.6	5.4	5.5	5,551,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	31.5	31.5	31	31	163,100
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	400,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	500,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.1	3	3.1	411,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.44	2.48	2.38	2.38	640,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	2,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	1,235,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.38	0.39	0.37	0.38	36,670,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	150,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	250,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	20,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.175	0.2	0.175	0.2	60,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	10,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.6	1.62	1.6	1.6	100,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	1,990,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.96	0.97	450,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	90,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	18.5	18.5	18	18.25	434,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,600
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	6.9	6.9	6.7	6.7	18,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.7	7.7	7.6	7.6	15,262,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.48	0.49	0.48	0.49	200,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.245	0.245	4,860,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.13	0.13	2,400,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	6,890,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	30,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.14	1.16	1.14	1.14	5,825,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.64	0.64	0.64	0.64	50,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.55	0.56	0.55	0.56	800,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.44	2.48	2.44	2.48	13,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	20,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.38	1.38	258,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8	8	7.9	7.9	5,225,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.46	0.46	0.44	0.44	200,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	170,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	36,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	10,000
Benguet Corp. A	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	19,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	6,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.42	0.42	0.41	0.41	25,490,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.49	0.5	0.47	0.48	35,880,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	173,800,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.026	0.025	0.026	50,400,000
Omico Corp.	0.0048	0.0048	0.0046	0.0046	60,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.81	0.82	0.8	0.82	1,740,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.82	0.84	0.82	0.84	4,860,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	740,000
OIL					
Interport Res. B	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	51,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0046	0.005	0.0046	0.005	224,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	49,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.23	0.25	0.23	0.25	210,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.235	0.26	0.235	0.26	220,000
Pacifica	0.01	0.011	0.01	0.011	2,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.043	0.043	0.042	0.043	2,000,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.2	0.21	0.2	0.21	300,000

DISCLOSURES

BANK of the Philippine Islands closed last Jan. 5 the sale of its P8.6 billion non-performing loans to Philippine Asset Investment Inc., an affiliate of Morgan Stanley Emerging Markets Inc.

* * *

AYALA Land Inc. (ALI) disclosed that a portion of the P600.1 million it paid for Fil-Estate Group's 30.89 percent interest in the North Triangle Depot Commercial Corp. (NTDCC) was paid for in shares worth P320.1 million of two unlisted companies owning developable properties. The acquisition increased ALI's stake in NTDCC from 15.8 to 46.7 percent.

* * *

RICARDO Sison, first vice president of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), sold 200 of his PLDT shares for P1,390 each.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Flue-Curing and Redrying Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Jan. 27, 2 p.m. at the company's office in A. Bonifacio Street, Balintawak, Quezon City. Only stockholders of record as of Dec. 29 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting. ***Compiled by: Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

January 6, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.754091	1.000000	56.2200
Japan	Yen	0.007245	0.009607	0.5401
United Kingdom	Pound	1.419878	1.882900	105.8566
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.096826	0.128401	7.2187
Switzerland	Franc	0.645460	0.855945	48.1212
Canada	Dollar	0.615383	0.816060	45.8789
Singapore	Dollar	0.458108	0.607497	34.1535
Australia	Dollar	0.578557	0.767224	43.1333
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.000294	2.652590	149.1286
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.201091	0.266667	14.9920
Brunei	Dollar	0.456720	0.605657	34.0500
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000081	0.000107	0.0060
Thailand	Baht	0.019291	0.025582	1.4382
UAE	Dirham	0.205346	0.272309	15.3092
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.326100	74.5533
Argentina	Peso	0.253689	0.336417	18.9134
Brazil	Real	0.279397	0.370508	20.8300
Denmark	Kroner	0.134400	0.178228	10.0200
India	Rupee	0.017296	0.022936	1.2895
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.198471	0.263193	14.7967
Mexico	New Peso	0.066411	0.088067	4.9511
New Zealand	Dollar	0.529893	0.702691	39.5053
Norway	Kroner	0.121118	0.160614	9.0297
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012663	0.016793	0.9441
South Africa	Rand	0.128247	0.170068	9.5612
Korea	Won	0.000721	0.000956	0.0537
Sweden	Kroner	0.110753	0.146869	8.2570
Syria	Pound	0.014527	0.019264	1.0830
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023624	0.031328	1.7613
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000394	0.000522	0.0293

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2004 Titanium Silver,
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BMW 530d Exec.
2004 Black Sapphire,
1,120km, P4,650,000

BMW 530d Exec.
2004 Titanium Silver,
2,005km, P4,200, 000

BMW 325i Exec.
2004 Titanium Silver,
15,035km, P2,500,000

BMW 318i M Sport
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4,971km, P2,300,000

BMW 318i Exec.
2004 Steel Gray,
8,410km, P2,200,000

BMW 318i Exec.
2004 Black Sapphire,
5,321km, P2,200,000

BMW 318i Exec.
2004 Titanium Silver,
11,623km, P2,050,000

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2004 Orient Blue,
12,633km, P2,050,000

BMW 318i Exec.
2004 Orient Blue,
8,985km, P2,050,000

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2003 Topaz Blue,
3,226km, P1,975,000

BMW 318i
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BMW 316i
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1991 Calypso Red,
43,046km, P480,000

BMW 320iA
1998 Calypso Red,
89,216km, P750,000

BMW 320iA
1997 Calypso Red,
31,005km, P720,000

BMW 320iA
1997 Calypso Red,
67,996km, P720,000

BMW 320iA
1997 Arktis Silver,
69,548km, P720,000

BMW 320iA
1997 Cosmos Black,
134,362km, P690,000

BMW 316i
1997 Cosmos Black,
64,763km, P620,000

BMW 316i
1996 Cosmos Black,
39,003km, P600,000

BMW 316i
1996 Alpine White,
101,173km, P500,000

PriceSmart special: Lawsuit

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

THE LONG-FESTERING boardroom row at PriceSmart has spilled over to the courts, with the Filipino partners now seeking a court-appointed receiver before the money-losing Philippine subsidiary of the US warehouse chain sinks into further losses.

PriceSmart chair William Go and Metrobank, representing 48 percent of joint venture, filed the derivative suit after buyout talks with US PriceSmart chair/CEO Robert Price himself broke down.

Judge Alfredo Flores of Pasig Regional Trial Court 167 turned down the Filipinos' application for a temporary restraining order/preliminary injunction while the hearings are ongoing, but nevertheless ordered the expatriate management to maintain the status quo and keep Go as bank signatory.

According to the grapevine, Go had refused to sign the P2.4-million check payment for the 2005 lease of the company-paid North Forbes housing for country manager Benjamin Woods, asking the expatriate to instead find cheaper housing in view of the projected $4.6-million (over P258 million) 2004 loss of the Philippine operations.

But the San Diego, California headquarters overruled Go, and decided to advance the money, chargeable to the Philippine subsidiary.

The expatriate benefit package has been one of the sore points in the downhill relations between the Filipinos and their American partners, which started when the Philippine venture started losing heavily in 2002.

According to a special audit commissioned by Go and Metrobank, the Philippine company was also being charged stewardship fees not covered by any agreement with the San Diego headquarters.

In addition, the litigation costs incurred by the US chain against its first local partner, the ailing Gotesco group, was also allegedly charged to the present joint venture.

The first foreign retailer to take advantage of the liberalized Retail Trade Law, PriceSmart only made money—marginally at over P11 million—in the first two years of operation before being swamped with P350 million in net losses in 2003.

Because of the reversal, PriceSmart closed down its Ortigas branch and shelved an announced expansion in Cebu. It still has four branches in Metro Manila.

The Esguerra & Blanco law firm represents the Filipinos in the Pasig hearings, with the blue-chip Sycip Salazar appearing for the American multinational.

Dinosaurs at bay

THE TECHNOLOGY versus protectionism debate will be reprised today when the National Telecommunications Commission hears the opposition of the provincial telephone companies against the toll-free national direct dialing plan of staunch competitors PLDT and Globe-Innove.

The Private Telephone Companies of the Philippines and PT&T won the initial round after the NTC temporarily stopped, on grounds of "predatory pricing and discriminatory rates," the Jan. 5 launch by PLDT and Globe-Innove of identical promos.

The competing PLDT and Globe promotions effectively classify calls placed from anywhere to any fellow subscriber in the Philippine as local—no longer the money spinning long-distance—calls.

But with Smart/Piltel, Globe and Sun treating the entire Philippines as one calling-rate area and the technological leaps made by cellular phones as mobile replacement for the landlines, the handwriting is clearly on the wall.

Heard through the grapevine

CATS Motors is set to formally announce next week its appointment as the exclusive distributor and dealer of Mercedes-Benz cars and SUVs.

The long-time Philippine distributor, the debt-burdened Commercial Motors, has been left with the commercial vehicle dealership, with the option to open a car dealership within five years, this time under the supervision of CATS.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Fil-Estate to kick off Nasugbu project

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE FIL-ESTATE Group is set to jump-start two property projects this year after it raised some P200 to P250 million from the sale of its stake in the North Triangle Depot Commercial Corp. (NTDCC) to property giant Ayala Land Inc. (ALI).

Industry sources told the INQUIRER that the group is set to launch Nasugbu Harbor Town this year, a 1,000-hectare residential project in Batangas.

Harbor Town is a joint venture project between the Fil-Estate Group and the Henry Sy group. Fil-Estate holds more than 70 percent of the project.

The Fil-Estate Group also holds rights to a 3,000-square meter property on Buendia. Industry sources said the group may develop this property into a high-rise residential project in two to three years.

ALI's interests in NTDCC grew to 46.7 percent from 15.8 percent after it acquired the Fil-Estate Group's 30.9 percent stake in NTDCC for P600.1 million.

ALI paid for a portion of this acquisition using shares in two unlisted firms owning pieces of property in the Makati Central District. The shares in these companies are valued at approximately P320.1 million.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, ALI officials said that they recognized the huge potential of the North Triangle commercial center project. Its acquisition would increase ALI's leasing portfolio and prop up its recurring income.

NTDCC is the holding firm that is involved in building a mall linked to the Metro Rail Transit station on North Edsa.

Fil-Estate Land, the property arm of the Fil-Estate conglomerate, had transferred its 15 percent NTDCC interests to ALI. The rest of the NTDCC stake to be turned over to ALI would come from another unit, Fil-Estate Management Inc.

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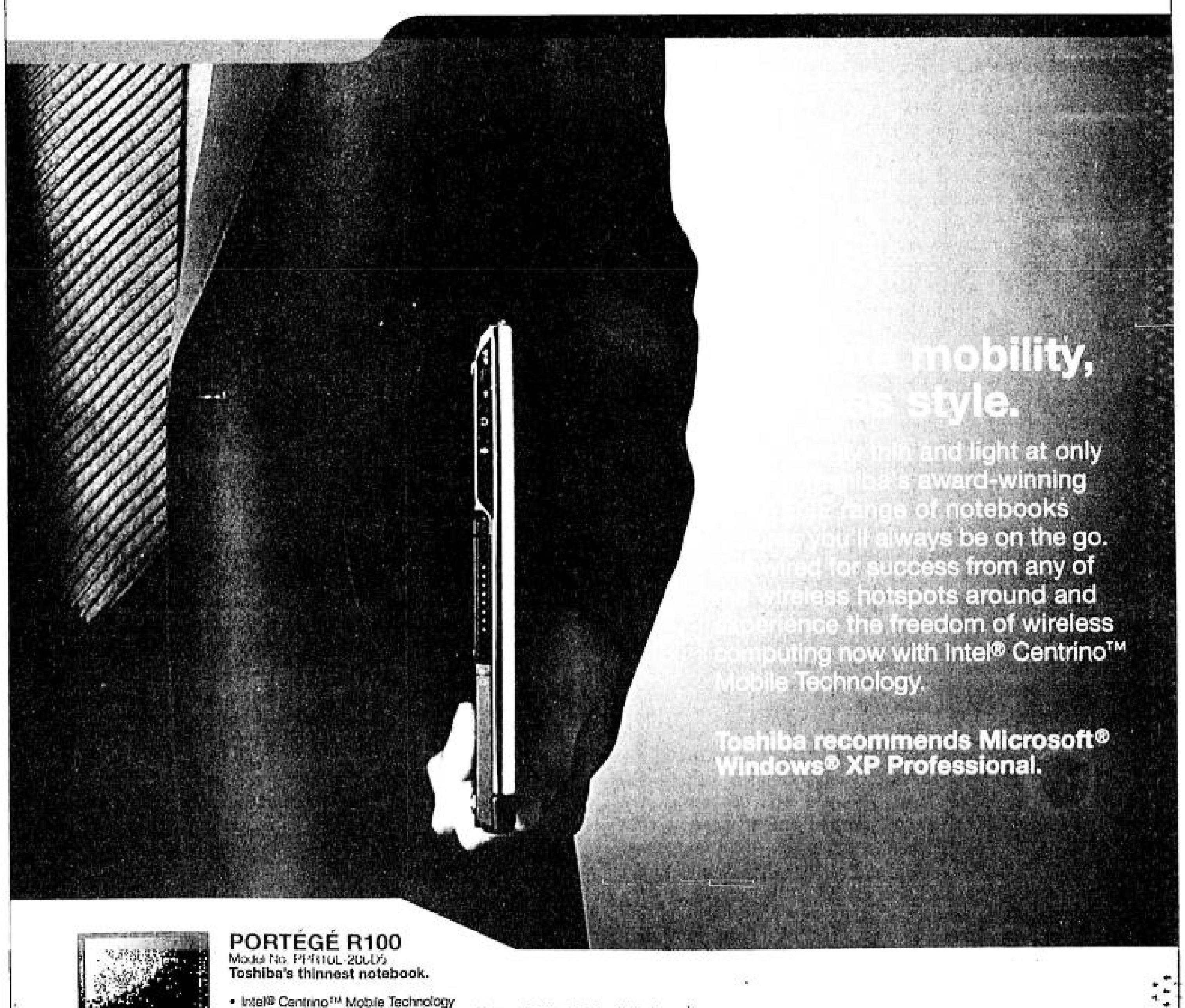

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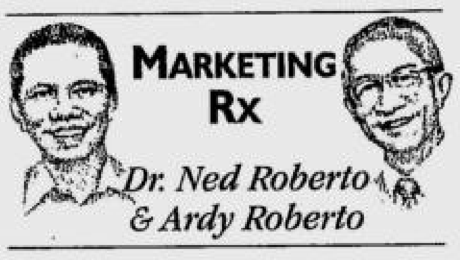
7 New Year's resolutions for marketers



Dr. Ned Roberto & Ardy Roberto

HERE are seven suggested resolutions marketers can make and KEEP to have a better, more profitable new year.

1. Put effort into internal marketing. Marketing to the target market and consumer segment is what gets formally planned. That marketing is what has come to be called "external marketing." But every company has its "internal customers." These are the people in the marketing and sales department, and those in the other departments including manufacturing, supply chain, finance, and human resources. To win their support, these "customers" need to be sold the company's product and marketing plan. They must buy in if the external customers are to buy and if the marketing plan is to gain the support it needs from them. It's "internal marketing." If it is to succeed, it needs the same formal planning, implementing, monitoring and control given to external marketing

2. Target your most "market attractive" market segment. That's the segment that has the largest market size and has the priority product and service values that your product or service can satisfy better than your competitors. So stop wasting time going after a market that doesn't want you—or can't afford you!

3. Make research-based pricing decisions. One of our most popular columns last year was "How to make painless pricing decisions." Instead of just asking your office mates and boss what price they think the market will accept your new product or service, ask your target market. The best way is to ask: at what price are you NOT willing to buy this product anymore? Basically, when you do your market research, you never ask them what price they are willing to pay. You'll get baloney answers. They'll say, "*Siguro iyong mura.*" People don't know what they want. But they do know what they DON'T WANT. It's the same thing with pricing your products. Let your customers tell you at what price they are n-o-t willing to pay anymore for your product or service. There is an organized, scientific way of doing this. Most professional research agencies now know how to do this. If you're an entrepreneur, you can still do this kind of research, do-it-yourself-style. All you have to do is show your product or a description of your product and produce a chart displaying the current price of your product/s or service/s. Then show a series of prices that are higher than the current price. Then ask the question. "Okay, here's the price of the product that you are currently buying. At what price will you begin to substitute, replace or stop buying this product?" Then you show the prices in increasing scale. Take note of their answers. If you have a small trading business with 20 or 30 customers, then you can do a census and ask all of your customers. If you have 20,000 customers, then ask your friendly neighborhood research agency to survey a correct sampling of your customer base.

4. Delegate your communications and creatives to the experts. Many times, marketers can get so fired up and frustrated when they don't get the desired response from their target market—especially when they've written the advertising or direct mail copy themselves! Before you get too frustrated, look at how you've been communicating your cause to them. That may be the problem. Many marketers are like entrepreneurs. They like to do everything themselves. This, of course, stems from a lack of resources. But before you get burned out doing everything yourself, get some help from your friendly neighborhood marketing communications experts. If you can't afford a big creative or ad agency, there are budding boutique agencies more than willing to take on your business. It's more expensive in the long run to do everything yourself.

5. Generate new product ideas by asking your customers or target market what they hate, not what they want. What consumers know is what they do not want, what they do not need, what they do not like, and what they hate. Consumers are experts at talking about the details of their problems and concerns. When you succeed in getting consumers to talk about what's making them happy or contented, they speak in generic terms without the engaging details. The better and richer new product in-sighting and idea-generating question asks very simply: "This product that you now use to satisfy your need for (state your product function), have you at one time or another had any occasion when you were disappointed, annoyed or irritated with it? If you had, what specifically has disappointed, annoyed or irritated you about it?" When you find out the pet peeves of people and you have a potential product hit. There is a business opportunity in creating a product or service that solves or gets rid of that irritation.

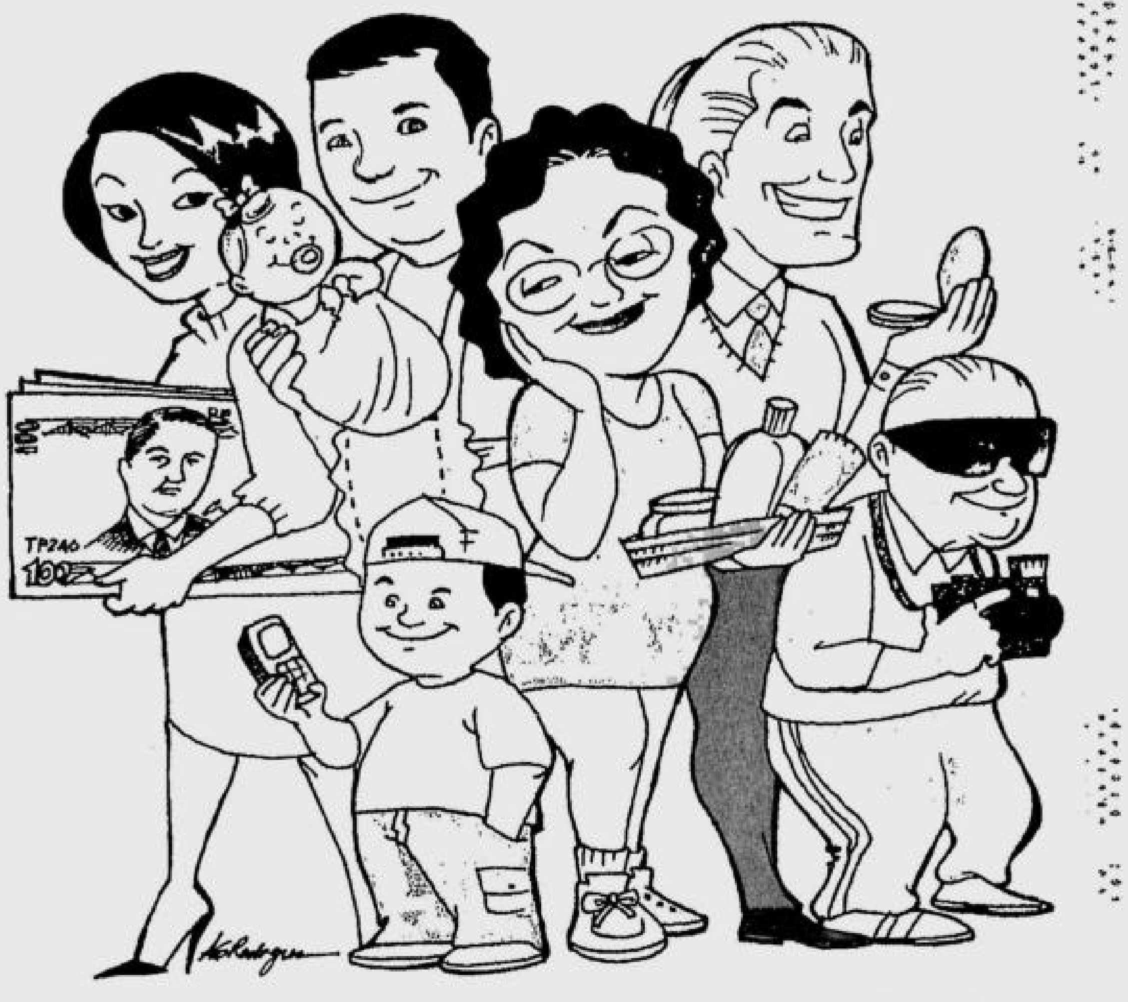
6. Be "market-driving" not just "market-driven." Sometimes, marketers focus too much on finding out what their target market segments want and come out with a competitive strategy that gives the market the product that it wants and needs. That is being market-driven. Having chosen the target market, the succeeding task of evolving and sustaining the brand positioning in the target market requires the market learns two things: the brand's distinctive meaning or why it is uniquely different from others, and the brand's direct link to the consumer's priority need or evolved priority. This requirement for target market learning changes the market targeting equation from being market-driven to market-driving. According to Professor Greg Carpenter of the Kellog School at Northwestern University, today's consumers know little about most new products and services. And so market learning must happen if these new products and services are to succeed. Consumers must learn. In fact, they have to learn even what they want. In turn, the experiencing comes from what marketers offer and present in their communication materials. All these define a new competitive market-driving strategy of market targeting. It says: Get consumers to learn what they want and then after, give them what they learned to want.

7. Have a personal growth plan to be a better, more effective marketer. Keep on reading the best and latest books, journals, and articles on marketing. Go back to "school" by attending marketing seminars and conferences here and abroad. Marketing is one of the most challenging careers characterized by constant change. To rely on what you learned about two years or a year ago is business suicide. Keep on learning!

The first six resolutions that we mentioned above are based on the columns that have received the most comments and response. There's a lot more that we'd like to include, but for now let's stop at seven. Keep your questions and comments coming. *Email us at MarketingRx@pldtDSL.net or text us at 0919-314-5412.*

Best market bets for this year

by Karen V. De Asis
Contributor



THE DECIDED shift toward micro-marketing, spurred by globalization and the proliferation of new media, technology and distribution channels, has challenged today's marketers to discover and explore new segments just waiting to be tapped.

In this year of the rooster, marketing experts see opportunities among baby boomers; metrosexuals; women with money; single, upwardly mobile young cosmopolitans; silver-haired citizens and empty nesters; husbands who stay at home; micro-entrepreneurs; ethnic communities; kids behaving like teenagers and bargain hunting consumers.

Baby boomer market

Born between 1946 and 1964, baby boomers today hold the world's record for the largest demographic segment with spending muscle.

Baby boomers are constantly preoccupied with ways and means to delay aging, maintain health and wellness, and keep an active mind and good spirits.

Not surprisingly, they remain focused targets for natural-based, health and wellness products and services, diets and fitness regimens, memory acuity and anti-aging products as well as surgical services that include even voice lifts to keep a youthful voice.

A 2004 ACNielsen report on What's Hot Around The Globe bears out this consumption behavior across 56 countries in the Asia Pacific, that included the Philippines, Europe, emerging countries, Latin and North America. The categories of hair care, sun care, hair removal, face cleansing and moisturizing, body cleansing and moisturizing all showed a +4 to +7 market growth. Star performers were face and eye moisturizers.

The anti-aging phenomenon has even hit television with the increasing popularity of the reality show "Extreme Makeover" that allows viewers worldwide to track major transformations in the appearance of the not so naturally endowed and gifted. Of course, local television has its counterpart, "Buhay Diva."

Metrosexuals

Soccer star David Beckham, today's metrosexual icon, is typical of straight men that happen to exhibit soft traits, originally identified with the female gender.

Hence, they enjoy the finer things in life, including fashion, passionate shopping, relaxation, spa and grooming treatments, even cooking.

Today's metrosexuals are not reined in by mainstream society's stereotype of how they should behave, dress and act.

In an ACNielsen Global 2004 report, the male population has boosted sales of personal care products, specifically in body cleansing and deodorants.

Also noticeable is the fact that the men's cosmetic Asian market is growing at a faster pace than in the West. Asian men are more open to using cosmetics in what was traditionally a woman's enclave.

A US focus group revealed that Western men shied away from skin care products because they did not understand the relevance of skin care benefits, like exfoliation.

On the other hand, Japanese companies are quick to benefit from the seemingly lucrative metrosexual market. In Japan, a remarkable 60 percent of 20-year-old men report that they dye their hair. A similar percentage would use an eyebrow liner to enhance their appearance.

New age women

Worldwide, women are enjoying greater financial freedom than ever before. With pocket power comes an open mind, fresher perspective and desire for higher learning.

In Europe, more women are pursuing doctorate degrees. Similarly, Ivy League schools like Harvard, Yale University and Columbia report that half of all students in their graduate degree programs are women. The same holds true at the De La Salle Graduate School of Business.

Around the world, one in four married women earns more than their husband.

With such financial gain, women are no longer dependent on the spouse's household budget or allowance. They now have their own personal money to spend.

Young, single, mobile

Others call this group, YOCOs or young cosmopolitans, but some are no longer that young. What makes them an exciting market segment to tap is their ever increasing disposable income.

They are usually married to their careers and are not about to get married soon. Others choose not to marry at all. They are perfect targets for convenience-driven and digital lifestyles, smart products and services (customer-friendly products with Internet based platforms) and those that promise intense sensory experiences like extreme sports, action packed or adventure weekends and sensations like aromatherapy, authentic ethnic foods and flavored drinks.

Style, design and aspirations are sure-fire ways to win them.

Silver-haired citizens

As the percentage of population over 60 years old continues to grow worldwide, categories catering to this market are also on the rise.

One such category is the adult incontinence pads/pants that grew by +4 percent equal to $84 million, according to the 2004 ACNielsen Global report.

Another is the personal care category driven mostly by anti-aging face and eye moisturizers that reduce wrinkles, lighten dark circles and blemishes. Likewise, hair care products that offer hair loss solutions and stay-young hair colorants.

Other categories that have yet to be tapped locally are memory loss nutraceuticals, recreation and "edu-travel," enrichment and life long learning, home improvements, etc.

Stay-at-home husbands

A strong emerging market is the segment of house-bound husbands, more recently referred to as the brave new dads or Mr. Mums.

While women are moving into traditionally male echelons, more men are taking on feminine roles, including active responsibilities in parenting, and home upkeep like tutoring the kids, house cleaning, marketing and cooking.

Micro-entrepreneurs

An emerging market is the increasing number of employees and workers leaving the mainstream workforce to start new careers or move into second careers on their own.

The phenomenon is partly due to the wave of layoffs that swept corporate America, but it is also caused by the desire of breadwinners to spend more time with their family.

These micro-entrepreneurs control their time, hold offices in their homes, are regular patrons of business centers and business process outsourcing. They are likely clients and providers of B2B solutions and Web-based platforms and solutions, etc.

Ethnic communities

Ethnic communities have strong ties to race, language, religion or culture. Locally, the Chinese and Muslim communities each have a stronghold of at least 5 percent of the general population of 82 million.

Overseas, there is the increasing number of migrant OFW workers building communities elsewhere.

Globally, marketers across different categories from ultra-chic fashion brands to personal care to technology brands are racing to address the needs of Muslims, while presenting this group with products and services suited to their culture, tradition and lifestyle.

All three ethnic markets have yet to be fully tapped by Filipino marketers.

Tweens

Tweens, eight to 12 years old are no longer at the crossroads of choosing to remain a kid or behaving like a young adult.

They have cast their votes, with pre-teens now acting and thinking older, behaving more like teenagers. This means that marketers with tween brands need to put in more teen appeal.

No small wonder that the cable TV series, "The Amanda Show" and "Brothers Garcia" are all-time favorites among young, urban tweens.

EDLP consumers

Every day low pricing (EDLP) consumers know that each time they visit an EDLP store, they are guaranteed the same low price. Hence, retailers that promise EDLP do not rely on price promotions to extend the lowest price. In the Philippines, where there is an increased concern over the economy (87 percent) and where consumer sentiment remains low with prevailing pessimism over economic performance in 2005, as indicated in ACNielsens Consumer Confidence Trend in the second half of 2004, catering to the needs of practical and prudent-spending consumers made up by the majority CDE markets may yet be the avenue for trade marketers to stimulate sales and increase overall retail revenues.

(The author teaches Strategic Brand Management at the De La Salle Professional School's Graduate School of Business. Feedback at kdeasis@skyinet.net.)

Weight loss firms seek knockout of low-carb

LOS ANGELES—Proclaiming an end to the low-carb diet craze, US weight loss companies are launching a marketing blitz aimed at winning over consumers resolved to shed flab once and for all in the New Year.

As the number of Americans following low-carbohydrate regimens like Atkins and South Beach continues to fall, stalwart diet companies such as Weight Watchers International Inc. and Jenny Craig Inc. are confident they can regain the upper hand in 2005.

Already, Weight Watchers shares have gained nearly 16 percent in the last two months, partly in anticipation of an improved outlook.

"We are seeing a nice resurgence," said Scott Parker, vice president of marketing for privately held Jenny Craig. "A lot of people have been let down by the promises of these other kinds of approaches."

The popularity of low-carb diets, which shun foods like bread and pasta in favor of proteins like meat and cheese, soared at the beginning of 2004 as an estimated 9.1 percent of Americans took up the regimens.

Since then, however, the number of consumers on diets like Atkins fell to 3.6 percent in November, according to The NPD Group, a market research firm.

Sales growth of low-carb packaged foods have also slowed after big food makers scrambled earlier this year to roll out low-carb versions of everything from cookies to cereal.

The low-carb boom and ensuing media focus on the two-thirds of American adults who are overweight has made consumers more aware of the dangers of being fat, experts said.

But as the popularity of low-carb diets has died down, debates over healthy eating have raged on, and a trend toward more balanced eating is emerging.

Both Jenny Craig and Weight Watchers will be touting the sustainability of their programs in advertising and new products early this year, though neither has been specific about membership projections.

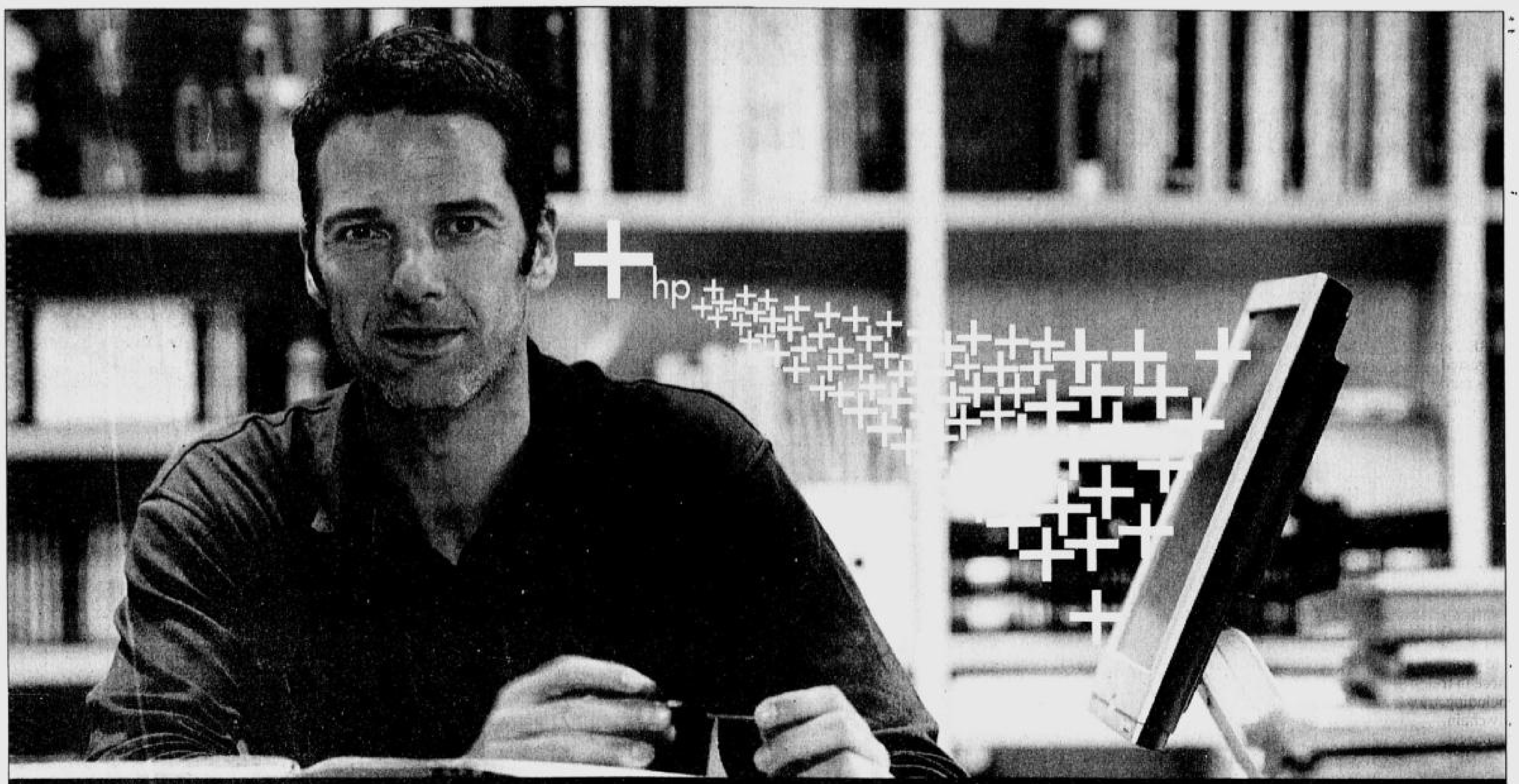
Jenny Craig will promote its personalized "Your Style" approach in a television ad campaign featuring actress Kirstie Alley, who is trying to lose weight on the program.

It will also run ads featuring consumers who have successfully lost weight with Jenny Craig, Parker said.

Weight Watchers, which recently began offering its clients a choice of two programs in an effort to expand its appeal, will also be promoting a new book, "Weight Loss for Life," which a spokeswoman said seeks to debunk the myths of dieting.

One of the myths in the book: "Calories don't matter—avoid fats or carbs to lose weight successfully," appears to take direct aim at low-carb diets.

Health club operator Bally Total Fitness Holding Corp. is also hoping one of its new TV ads, which features women in a salon discussing their failed dieting attempts, will strike a chord with disillusioned low-carb dieters, chief executive Paul Toback said in a telephone interview. *Reuters*



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The HP Contact Center is available Mondays thru Fridays 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Keep cholesterol at bay

THE JUST concluded 2004 Holiday season, like all Holidays past, has been associated with gastronomic delights. It was the time when people most likely threw caution to the winds and binged on lechon, ham, barbecue, salad and other mouth-watering delicacies.

While these foods may have been treats for the stomach, they may not have necessarily been good for the health. "A 100-gram serving of lechon is equivalent to 546 calories. The sauce, which adds flavor, also adds another 65 calories. On the other hand, a slice of cheesecake is equal to 276 calories," says Sanirose Orbeta, vice president of the Philippine Association for the Study of Overweight and Obesity.

These fat-laden foods, which sadly are the Filipinos traditional Christmas dinner, can cause dyslipidemia, an abnormality in the cholesterol levels of the body.

Getting diagnosed with high low-density lipoprotein (LDL), high triglycerides and low high-density lipoprotein (HDL) can bring about drastic changes in your lifestyle, most especially in the way you eat. Managing dyslipidemia can cause you to cut back on fat. This change can be truly difficult. Fortunately, there are several types of drugs available for reversing dyslipidemia. One of them is fenofibrate.

Fenofibrate corrects lipoprotein abnormalities in the body by increasing the level of good cholesterol (HDL) and decreasing bad cholesterol (LDL and triglycerides). The drug is particularly beneficial to diabetic patients because it does not adversely affect blood sugar control.

Fibrates, particularly fenofibrates, has been proven to delay the progression of atherosclerosis (thickening of plaques on the blood vessels) among dyslipidemic patients with diabetes. In the Diabetes Atherosclerosis Intervention Study (DAIS) published at The Lancet, it was shown that patients who took fenofibrate instead of placebo had a 40-percent decline in the progression of atherosclerosis.

The results of DAIS provide important data with significant implication for patients with dyslipidemia, particularly those with diabetes. The outcome of the trial indicates that fibrate therapy is an important therapeutic option as a primary or adjunctive therapy in the treatment of diabetic dyslipidemia.

Fenofibrate is currently being investigated through the Fenofibrate Intervention and Event lowering in Diabetes (FIELD) study. This clinical trial, the largest trial to date in a population with type 2 diabetes, is examining the therapeutic effects of micronized fenofibrate on fatal coronary artery disease.

The use of fenofibrate has been recommended as a first-line therapeutic option for dyslipidemia by the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP). NCEP, which is coordinated by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), provides a set of guidelines for the management of dyslipidemia.

The need to keep cholesterol levels at bay, as hard as it may seem, is required because the level of bad cholesterol in the body has a lot to do with one's chances of getting cardiovascular disease. CVD remains to be the leading cause of death in the Philippines and in the world. Through therapeutic treatment and healthy lifestyle practices, doctors hope to put a stop to the escalating prevalence of CVD worldwide.

Patriot Pharmaceutical Corp, a Filipino-owned pharmaceutical company, will soon launch a new and affordable brand of 200 mg fenofibrate in the market.

POWER PLANT MALL CONTINUES TO UPGRADE BOWLING LANES

Fulfilling its vision of providing only the best lanes in the country today, Power Plant Mall's PowerBowl has invested in a P1.2-million bowling lane conditioning machine by Kegel, a respected and highly regarded international name in providing lane maintenance solutions worldwide. Shown seated, from left, are Rockwell Land CEO Tong Padilla, Kegel Asia Inc president Johnson Cheng, Rockwell Land board chair Manolo M. Lopez and Kegel vice president James dela Cruz. Looking on are Kegel general manager Yap Kok Wee, Power Plant VP for retail JP Masakayan and Rockwell Land VP for finance Adolfo Granados.

Food Cart Business 2005 at PTTC

IT'S ALL systems go for Food Cart Business 2005, the 1st Philippine Food Cart Trade Expo from Jan. 28 to 30 at the Philippine Trade Training Center. The profile of the exhibit includes Food Cart Food products, Food Cart Ingredients, Food Cart Equipment and Fixtures, and Food Carts. Exhibitors will also comprise of franschises, packaging, signages, Internet services, graphic arts, food magazines and tracking systems.

It would be a three-day exhibit of products and services in the growing food cart industry pioneered by the phenomenal growth of a popular French fries potato cart business and now re-engineered to almost operating perfection by a squid ball cart company and over a hundred successful food cart operators that have become successful fast-food chains.

Organizer JOSM Gospel Events Management Services, has put up the exhibit for reasons that Food Carts are fast multiplying. The group says there are now over 100 food cart chain operators in Metro Manila alone, with no less than 5,000 food cart stores among themselves scattered in malls, supermarkets, schools, parks and now within office buildings.

The exhibit will enable entrepreneurs and those who want to have a business learn how to start an easy and profitable food cart business; meet all suppliers of products and services (cart designers and makers; manufacturers of squid balls, shrimp balls, dimsum, makers of pizza, hotdog, doughnuts, waffles, kimpao, importers of French fries, popcorn, coffee blends and softserve ice cream; suppliers of crew uniforms, signages and tarpaulin banners, corporate giveaways); interface with franchisers of food cart franchises; benchmark their strong points to gain competitive advantage, and; find the right locations for their food cart businesses. There would also be seminars on how to learn Food Cart start-up and management; discover instant businesses; know the hottest franchise businesses and know the most promising businesses in 2005.

Josm Rosuello, president/CEO, JOSM Gospel Events Management, states that this would be an innovative trade exhibit like no other. The exhibit is in joint venture with Mind Behind Advertising, in cooperation with the FoodCart Association of the Philippines; True Riches Ministry, Jesus Our Savior Ministry, Food Service Consultants and Franchise League of the Philippines.

Bits Clips

De Rueda Clan reunion

THE DE Rueda Clan will hold its annual Balik Tipon family reunion on Jan. 9 at Knights of Columbus Clubhouse, Barangay Malasim, San Jose City, Nueva Ecija at Km 161, as announced by Ramon Rueda Padolina, president of the Rueda Clan and lawyer Ernesto Rueda. Relatives in Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Bataan, Metro Manila and neighboring provinces are reminded and enjoined to attend the whole day affair. Hosting the Balik Tipon reunion is Dr Susana Rueda Violago. For more information, call lawyer Ernesto Rueda at 740-0743, Ramon Padolina at 936-7805; in Bulacan, Ado and Efren Rueda of San Miguel, Peter Rueda and Rancy Rueda Garcia of Plaridel, and Senador Rueda of Baliwag. In Nueva Ecija, call Rene Rueda of Gapan at 044-4860186, Lorenzo Rueda of San Nicolas, Gapan; Eliseo Rueda of Cabiao and Rolando (Willy) Balajonda of Baloc, Sto. Domingo and in Balanga City, call Gerry Rueda at 047-2372227.

Photo workshops

A SERIES of basic and advanced photography courses is about to be conducted by the Federation of Philippine Photographers Foundation (FPPF) at Fort Santiago, Intramuros, Manila. The basic photo course will start on Sunday, Jan. 9, while the advanced course is on Jan. 8, Saturday. Sponsors are Fuji/YKL and the Intramuros Administration. Lecturers are multi-awarded and veteran photographers Vic Sison, Ador Pamintuan, professor Cecilia Angeles, Ed Santiago, Tilak Hettige, and Tony Raval. FPPF can be contacted care of Lerma Aquino or Beverly Estrosas at the 7th floor of Comfoods Building, Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue corner Chino Roces Avenue, Makati. Call 843-5341 or 813-7420.

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NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that the following Certificates of Authority issued by the Board of Investments (BOI) in favor of PFIZER, INC. pursuant to the provisions of Republic Act 5455, as amended were lost and despite diligent efforts to locate them, they cannot be found:

Certificate No.	Date Issued
410	July 15, 1981
679	March 22, 1985
696	May 17, 1985

This notice is being given in compliance with the requirements of the Board of Investments for the cancellation of the aforementioned certificates.

ALBERTO G. MATEO, JR.
Treasurer
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(PDI--Jan. 7, 2005)

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LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of ADELAIDA E. PASAMBA consisting of cash deposited at UCPB Savings Account at Tanay, Rizal has been settled extrajudicially by her heirs, as per Doc No. 532, Page No. 95, Book No. XXII, Series of 2004 of Notary Public Rufino P. Quintiong of Rizal Province.
PDI-Dec 24, 31 & Jan 7, 2004

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late FELIX D. SANDIKO has been extrajudicially settled with an affidavit of self-adjudication by his heir as per Doc #442 Page 90 Book XIV Series of 2004 before Atty. Alfonso C. Villamil, Jr. of Pangasinan (PDI-Dec.31,2004,Jan.7&14,2005)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late LEONARDO M. PAULE has been extra-judicially settled by his heirs as per Doc. No. 125; Page No. 26; Book VIII; Series of 2004 before Notary Public Atty. Maria Zarah R. Villanueva.
(PDI-January 7, 14& 21, 2005)

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
MAKATI CITY) S S

AFFIDAVIT

I, MARCIAL P. MORALES JR., Filipino, of legal age, and with office address at the Atlantic, Gulf & Pacific Co. of Manila, Inc. (AG&P), Upper Ground, Unit 3 Commercial Center, Pioneer Highlands Condominium Tower 2, Pioneer Street cor. Madison Street, Mandaluyong City, after having been duly sworn to in accordance with law, hereby depose and say that:

1. I am at currently the Vice President for Finance & Administration of the AG&P as such, I am duly authorized to execute this Affidavit for and in its behalf.
2. Earlier, AG&P was issued by the Board of Investments (BOI) a Certificate of Registration (No. 85-1017) pertaining to AG&P's Creosoting/Wood Preserving Divisions.
3. Later, however, considering that AG&P had focused its business on core activity of heavy steel fabrication, those business units outside of its core business, such as General Construction, Machinery Sales and Creosoting/Wood Preserving Divisions, were phased out, thus, resulting in their subsequent closure, the disposal of their assets as well as separation from the service of their respective personnel (please refer to Annexes "A" and "B" of AG&P's Letter to BOI dated 03 November 2004).
4. The remaining Plant in Ilagan, Isabela has been inactive, and has been up for sale since 1998. Due to passage of time, the buildings and equipment therein have already deteriorated.
5. Considering that all personnel of the former Creosoting/Wood Preserving Divisions of AG&P have been separated from the service, the records or files of said divisions could no longer be found/located, including the original copy of Certificate of Registration No. 85-1017 issued by the BOI.
6. I am executing this Affidavit of Loss to attest to the veracity of the foregoing facts.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 19th day of November 2004 at Makati City.

MARCIAL P. MORALES, JR.
Affiant

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME, this 19th day of November 2004 at Makati City, affiant exhibited to me his Community Tax Cert. No. 23281808 issued on 3-03-04 at Q.C.

Doc No 83;
Page No 17;
Book No VIII;
Series of 2004
(PDI--Jan 7 2005)

ATTY. DOMINADOR LIBATIQUE, JR.
NOTARY PUBLIC
UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 2004
PTR No. 7012468 - JAN 5 2004 MAKATI CITY
IBP No. 577922 - SEPT 10 2003 LAGUNA

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- 36195 36196 36025 31483
36182 36188 36151 TCH1 -
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47955 47971 47773 47863
31393 31403 47761

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Marissa Del Mar give 'Aginaldong Areglado'

WITH the economic growth comes the influx of migrants and Paranaque City is no exemption. Up Close and Personal with Marissa Del Mar in cooperation with Millicent Foundation goes to Paranaque City Hall and Sta. Rita Baclaran Church for a gift giving outreach and through the effort of the local government of Paranaque City headed by Mayor Jun Bernabe and Councilor Doods Antipuesto gave 1500 free birth and marriage certificates, medical mission, feeding program, giving away of medicines. The event was featured on Up Close and Personal with Marissa Del Mar entitled "Aginaldong Areglado (Baclaran Gift Giving and Antrike)" aired on Jan. 4 as the prime opener for the year of the show.

PMAP joins National Day of Mourning

THE Personnel Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP) calls on all HR practitioners to lead employees of their respective companies in the observance of the Jan. 7, 2005 National Day of Mourning. This appeal was made by PMAP's President-elect Lina A. Aseneta, FPM of Fernandez, Santos and Lopez, CPAs, in an executive meeting held recently at the PMAP Center in Mandaluyong as a gesture of support to the announcement made by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and in sympathy of the countless victims of the worst-ever catastrophe in the South Asian Countries. HR professionals of the PMAP member-companies are encouraged to lead the observance by offering prayers in their respective workplaces in the morning or during lunch break.

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BMHI

BCDA Management and Holdings, Inc.

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

BCDA Management & Holdings Incorporated (BMHI) invites interested Contractors to submit Application for Eligibility and if found eligible, to Bid subsequently for the Project stated below:

Contract Package Name and Location	Scope of Works	IAC Category and Classification	PCAB License Category	Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) / Source of Funds	Project Duration
Upgrading of Electrical System for MB Units to Accommodate ACU Load (PNP/NAPOLCOM Awarded Units) Pamayanang Diego Silang, Ususan, Taguig City, M. M.	• Replacement of Main Circuit Breaker • Supply & Installation of Feeder Lines • Other Related Works	At Least Medium "A" for Distribution Lines	At Least Category "B"	Php 12,099,669.57	Ninety (90) calendar days

Prospective Contractors should have completed a similar contract for Upgrading/Installation of Electrical System to accommodate ACU load for MRB housing units.

Applications for Eligibility (legal, technical and financial documents and statements) shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria set forth in the Instructions to Applicants for Eligibility and to Bid. Only Eligible Bidders shall be invited by BMHI to participate in the bidding. All bids equal to or lower than the ABC shall be evaluated based on the contractor's offer for the contract under bidding, and shall be subject to detailed evaluation, and the lowest responsive bidder to Post-qualification before any award is made. Bid prices submitted higher than the ABC shall be rejected and returned outright.

Application for Eligibility and Eligibility Forms will be available for issuance at the *Small Conference Room, Main Lobby BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center 31st Street Corner 2nd Avenue, Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City, Metro Manila* before 5:00 PM on January 10 – 19, 2005, upon submission of Letter of Intent (LOI) addressed to the BMHI Procurement Bids and Award Committee (BMHI-PBAC) Chairperson and payment of a non-refundable fee of **ONE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED PESOS (P1,500.00)**. Duly accomplished Application for Eligibility and Eligibility Forms shall be submitted not later than January 26, 2005, 5:00pm at the above-mentioned address.

For further information or clarification, please get in touch with Atty. Peter Paul Andrew T. Flores of the BMHI-PBAC at 816-0989.

(Sgd.) **GLORIA GEORGINA DJ. JOTA**
BMHI-PBAC Chairperson

(PDI--Jan. 7 & 14, 2005)

PSALM
POWER SECTOR
ASSETS & LIABILITIES
MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

INVITATION TO BID

The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation ("*PSALM*") Privatization, Bids and Award Committee ("*Committee*") invites interested parties to participate in and bid for the privatization of the following:

Plant Equipment, Components, Auxiliaries and Accessories of the Manila Thermal Power Plant located at Isla de Provisor, Paco, Manila

(the "*Asset*"). The Asset is being privatized on an "*as is where is*" basis.

Interested parties are required to submit a Letter of Interest ("*LOI*") to PSALM which shall state the full name, address, telephone and fax number of the interested party, name of the principal contact, and signed by an authorized representative. All LOIs must be received by PSALM at the PSALM Office, 2nd Floor, SGV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, not later than 5:00 p.m. on January 14, 2005 (the "*LOI Submission Deadline*"). Only interested parties that submit an LOI by the LOI Submission Deadline shall be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

As a prerequisite to the receipt of the Bidding Package, interested parties shall execute a Confidentiality Agreement and an Undertaking pursuant to Section 78 of RA 9136, in the forms provided by PSALM, and pay a non-refundable fee in the amount of Five Hundred U.S. Dollars (U.S. $ 500.00) (the "*Participation Fee*"). The Participation Fee shall either be in cash, manager's check or cashier's check. All bank charges, if any, shall be for the account of the interested party. The Confidentiality Agreement, Undertaking and Participation Fee must be received by PSALM on or before 5:00 p.m. of January 17, 2005 to entitle an interested party further participation in the privatization of the Asset.

The Bidding Package, which includes the bidding procedures, shall be issued during office hours (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) from January 10 until January 18, 2005 at 5:00 p.m. (the "*Deadline*") at the PSALM Office. In accordance with the bidding procedures, only interested parties who have been issued the Bidding Package by the Deadline or a consortium which includes an interested party will be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

The schedule of the bidding activities shall be as follows:

Due Diligence : January 10, 2005 to February 14, 2005
Pre-bid Conference : January 19, 2005, 9:30 a.m. at the PSALM Office
Deadline for Receipt of Bids by PSALM : February 18, 2005, 12:00 p.m. at the PSALM Office

References to dates and times shall be based on Manila time. Should any of the above dates fall on a holiday, the deadline shall be extended to the same time of the immediately succeeding business day in Makati City.

Interested parties will be required to post a bid security equivalent to ten percent (10%) of its total bid price in the form of an irrevocable letter of credit, confirmed by a local bank and acceptable to the Committee. The bid security of the winning bidder shall be substituted by a performance security to guarantee prompt, faithful and complete performance of its obligations under the transaction. A two-envelope bidding system will be adopted. Other details of the privatization of the Asset are contained in the Bidding Package.

Letters of Interest, Confidentiality Agreements and Undertakings shall be addressed and submitted to: The Chairman, Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee, PSALM Corporation, 2nd Floor, SGV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Philippines. Inquiries and clarifications shall be addressed to Mr. Froilan A. Tampinco at the PSALM Office or at telephone number (632) 893-8202, fax number (632) 840-5341 or e-mail address fatampinco@psalm.gov.ph.

The Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any interested party or bidder or proposals or bids therefrom, or any part thereof, and/or to waive any defects contained therein and accept the offer most advantageous to the Government, without offering any reason whatsoever. It does not assume any obligation to compensate or indemnify parties for any expense or loss that they may incur as a result of their participation in the privatization process, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made. Finally, it reserves the right to modify, supplement, or change the Bidding Procedures and other aspects of the privatization process at any time, including the schedule and the venue provided herein, for any reason whatsoever and without giving prior notice. Interested parties and/or bidders will be notified subsequently of such modifications, supplements, or changes.

(Sgd.) **VINCENT S. PEREZ, JR.**
Chairman
PSALM Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI--Jan. 5, 6 & 7, 2005)

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- ➢ Willing to serve the poor

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The Administrative Officer
KASAGANA KA Microfinance Institution, Inc.
#9 Don Rafael St., Don Enrique Heights,
Commonwealth Ave., Holy Spirit, Quezon City
Tel. # 931-4335

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region V, Legazpi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR GRAINS HAULING SERVICES FOR NFA ALBAY

The National Food Authority, Regional Office, Legazpi City invites all qualified contractors to apply for eligibility to bid for the provisions of grains hauling services of NFA local and imported grains from NFA Albay for the calendar year 2005 to the following specific routes:

Route	Estimated Volume For Hauling (In MT)	Estimated Budget for the Contract Based on General Operating Fund
From Tabaco City to:		
Cam. Norte	11,500	P 7,843,000.00
Cam. Sur	20,000	8,160,000.00
Sorsogon	10,750	3,426,562.50
Ligao City	7,440	1,660,050.00
Libon, Albay	4,510	1,259,981.25
Legazpi City	12,600	1,764,000.00
From Legazpi City to:		
Cam. Norte	1,000	345,000.00
Cam. Sur	1,000	595,200.00
Sorsogon	500	106,875.00
TOTAL	69,300	P 25,362,968.75

The schedule of bidding activities are as follows:

Activity	Date	Time
1. Issuance of eligibility requirements	Jan. 5-11, 2005	8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
2. Submission of eligibility requirements and issuance of bid docs.	Jan. 12-20, 2005	8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
3. Pre-Bid Conference	Jan. 24, 2005	2:00 PM
4. Eligibility requirement checklist / Deadline for submission of bid Proposals/Opening of bids	Feb. 7, 2005	10:00 AM

The eligibility requirements and other bid documents can be obtained from the RBAC Secretariat after payment of a non-transferrable / non-refundable registration fee in the amount of P5,000.00.

To provide ample time to examine the bidding documents and to prepare their respective bids, prospective bidders may secure the needed eligibility requirements and other related documents at the time the invitation to apply for eligibility and to bid is first advertised.

For further inquiries, you may contact the RBAC Secretariat in the following telephone numbers: (052) 480-7933 / 480-7015 / 480-7085 / 820-008 and fax number (052) 480-7900.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) **JOSE B. GUEVARA**
RBAC Chairman

(PDI – January 7 & 13, 2005)

PUBLIC ESTATES AUTHORITY
7th FLOOR LEGASPI TOWERS 200 PASEO DE ROXAS, CITY OF MAKATI, METRO MANILA
TELEPHONE NUMBERS 817-47-11 • 817-47-12 • 817-47-13
817-5017 • 817-5018 • 817-5014 • 817-1441/48
FAX (632) 815-2602 • 815-2060 • 817-3127
ZIP CODE 1226

INVITATION TO BID

The **PHILIPPINE RECLAMATION AUTHORITY (PRA)** formerly known as the ***PUBLIC ESTATES AUTHORITY (PEA)*** is inviting interested parties to participate in the public bidding for the lease of about 1.71 hectares for mixed use purposes and landscape development of about 6.86 hectares of its property known as the ***ESPLANADE***, located at the west end (Bay side) of the Central Business Park I – Island A (CBP I-A) Bay City, Pasay City.

Qualified participants are:

1.) Any Filipino citizen of legal age,
2.) Any partnership, association or corporation, public or private, of which at least 60% of the capital stock or of any interest in said capital stock belongs wholly to citizens of the Philippines and which is created and organized under the laws of the Philippines.

Interested parties may obtain the Terms of Reference and Bid Documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P2,000.00 in cash or Manager's Check starting on January 17, 2005 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the office of the Secretariat, PRA Real Estates Bids and Award Committee (PREBAC) 7th Floor Legaspi Towers 200, Paseo De Roxas, Makati City.

Further information, inquiries may be made to the PREBAC in the above address with telephone numbers 817-4711 to 817-4713 (trunklines).

(Sgd.) **TEODORICO C. TAGUINOD**
General Manager/CEO

(PDI--Jan. 7, 11, 17, 25, Feb. 1 & 7, 2005)

PNOC PETROCHEMICAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
PNOC Building VI, Energy Center
Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, M.M.
Tel. No.: 812-6209 / 840-1440

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The PHILIPPINE NATIONAL OIL COMPANY (PNOC) invites interested suppliers to apply for eligibility and bid for the following requirement:

Project No. : WFM 05 – 003
Project Title : Supply of Labor and Equipment for Various Park Support Services (Custodial Services)
Pre-Bid Meeting : January 13, 2005 (2:00 PM)
Eligibility Deadline : January 17, 2005 (3:00 PM)
Bid Deadline : January 27, 2005 (2:00 PM)
Approved Budget : P3,300,000.00

Eligibility forms shall be available for issuance upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P100.00 while bidding documents shall be available for issuance to eligible bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P100.00 at the PNOC-Property and Supply Management Division (PSMD) at the G/F of the PNOC Building from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM.

All bids exceeding P1,000,000.00 must be accompanied by a bid security in the form of Cash, Manager's/Cashier's Check equivalent to 1% of the Approved Budget of the Contract (ABC) or 2.5% of the ABC in the form of a Surety Bond secured from any one of PNOC's accredited bonding companies.

The PNOC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive formality therein or to accept such bids or to award any work that are considered most advantageous to the company.

(Sgd.) **Atty. Pedro A. Aquino, Jr.**
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI--Jan. 6 & 7, 2005)

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE SCRAP/JUNK ITEMS

"AS IS, WHERE IS" BASIS

DATE OF BIDDING : January 25, 2005, 2:00 PM, Solanum Multi-Purpose Rooms, Bldg. 1, Ground Floor, NPC-HO, Agham Road corner Quezon Ave., Diliman, Quezon City

The National Power Corporation will conduct public bidding of the following scrap and junk items located at various NPC stations.

SCHEDULE 1 (Simultaneous public bidding at Zamboanga SPUG and NPC-HO, Diliman, Q.C.)

Item Description and Location	Minimum Bid Price
1. One (1) lot of junk diesel engine parts, scrap metals and corroded drums located at Isabela, Basilan	P 75,000.00/lot

SCHEDULE 2

Item Description and Location	Minimum Bid Price
1. One (1) lot of junk diesel engine parts, scrap metals and corroded drums located at Marinawa DPP, Bato, Catanduanes	P 128,000.00/lot
2. One (1) lot junk and scrap communication equipment cables, control panels, used batteries, office equipment and computers, One (1) unit motor vehicle, located at Systems Operations Warehouse, Hermosa, Bataan Note: Batteries are located at Systems Ops., Diliman, Q.C.	P 443,000.00/lot
3. One (1) lot junk/scrap items consisting of substation equipment, power cables, guy wires, office equipment and computers. GPEs, three (3) units junk motor vehicles, and other junk items in the cordoned off area at Mexico Substation, Mexico, Pampanga	P 773,250.00/lot
4. One (1) lot "PCB-Free" used transformer oil and Oil Circuit Breakers, twelve (12) sets located at Mexico Substation, Mexico, Pampanga. DENR permit to transport is required for this item. Note: Two (2) poles of the oil circuit breakers with PCB contamination is not included in the sale	P 4,028,430.00/lot

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:
1. PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGERS'S/CASHIER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE
2. LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN (2003 ORIGINAL OR XEROX COPY OF THE BIDDER OR AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT (ORIGINAL) OF THE COMPANY AND ONE (1) COPY OF VALID IDENTIFICATION CARD LIKE DRIVER'S LICENSE, GSIS, ID, SSS ID, POSTAL ID, PASSPORT, PRC ID AND COMPANY ID.

Interested parties who wish to participate in the public bidding may secure the bid form at P500.00/set from S.V. Lomuntad, Jr. at Bldg. 1, Ground Floor, NPC Head Office, Corner Agham Road and Quezon Ave., Diliman, Q.C. or call telephone no. 924-5384. Deadline for issuance of bid form is 4:30 PM January 24, 2005.

For the Materials Management Department
(Sgd.) **FELIX B. TACATA JR.**
OIC, MMD

(PDI–Jan 5, 6 & 7, 2005)

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PRIVATIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OFFICE

INVITATION TO BID

The asset being offered through public bidding, on an "as-is, where-is" basis, is a parcel of land with an area of 182.30 sq.m., more or less, located at Barangay Obrero, Tondo, Manila, formerly belonging to Delta Motors Corporation.

Indicative Price
P800,000

Bids will be received, opened and tabulated in the presence of the bidders on January 20, 2005 at 3:00 P.M. at the PMO Conference Room, 6th Floor, PMO Bldg., 104 Gamboa St., Legaspi Village, Makati City.

Interested parties may request for a duly authenticated copy of the Asset Specific Bidding Rules (ASBR), Asset Specific Bidding Form (ASBF) together with the Asset Specific Catalogue for a nominal fee of P300.00.

For more information, please call Ms. Melinda B. Cortez of the PMO Marketing Department at telephone numbers 892-2145 or 818-4733.

(PDI--Jan. 6, 7 & 8, 2005)

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I would rather be ashes than dust
I would rather live, not exist
Jack London

THOMAS EDWARD CALVENTO COX, JR.

Class '70 LSGH

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on January 5, 2005 at the age of 52.

His loving wife **SANDRA ROVERO**; children **TIN & TED**; brother & sisters **Joan & Helen, Inez & Jun, Irene & Alden, Betty & Sonny, Anne & Jess, Kathy, Bobby & Talyn**, relatives & friends request to please pray for his eternal rest.

His remains lie in state at Mt. Carmel Church, Doña Juana Rodriguez Avenue, New Manila, Quezon City.

Cremation will be on Sunday, January 9, 2005 at 8:00 A.M. after the 7:00 A.M. Mass at Loyola Memorial Chapel, Guadalupe, Makati City.

Message of Thanks

We the family of the late

ATTY. SIDRITO "Sid" V. RAMIRO

(January 6, 1937 – January 6, 2004)

would like to thank all those who offered masses and prayers during his 1st Death Anniversary yesterday, January 6, 2005.

His remains were laid to rest on January 11, 2004 At Himlayang Pilipino, Tandang Sora, Quezon City.

"Our true homes is in Heaven and Jesus Christ whose return we long for will come to save us" Php 3:20

"I am the way, the truth and the life..."
John 14:6

Our Dearly Beloved Great Grand Mother

LUY TAN BAN

Peacefully joined our Lord on December 30, 2004 at the age of 91.

Her bereaved husband **Luy Kim Guan**; children **Emmanuel & Virginia** (†) & **Jacinta, Enrique & Carolyn, Ernesto & Janice, Aurora & Charles, Leticia & Jose, Dionisia & Eugene, Pacita & Paul** and **Judith & William**; grandchildren **Kenneth** (†), **Chester, Giovanna, Lareina, Michel, Sarah Jane, Edwin & Irene, Enrique Jr., Ellery, Eaton, Alvina & Timothy, Audrey, Katherine, Richmond & Adoree, Gwendolyn, Emmeline, Genevieve, Denzell** and **Jamie**; great grandchildren **Eduardo, Edrick, Enrico, Isabella** and **Alexa**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Superior Chapel, Ground Floor, La Funeraria Paz, New Building, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Masses will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 6, 2005 and at 7:00 p.m. daily from Friday, January 7 to Tuesday, January 11, 2005.

Interment will be on Wednesday, January 12, 2005 at the Heritage Park, Bayani Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila after the 7:00 a.m. Mass.

Dearly Beloved

ALFREDO JABOLI GANAPIN

Peacefully joined his Creator on the 20th of December 2004 at the age of 43.

His loving wife **Anamie**; parents **Delfin Sr. & Alice**; brothers **Delfin Jr. & Samuel**; sisters **Marietta, Gina, Alice & Melinda**; nephews & nieces; parents, brothers & sisters-in-law; relatives and friends request everyone to join them in prayers for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His remains lie in state at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Memorial Chapel (beside Claret School), UP Village, Diliman, Quezon City. Daily masses will be celebrated.

Cremation will follow at Funeraria Paz, Quezon City at 12:00 noon on January 9, 2005 and afterwards, interment at the Columbary, Quezon City.

In lieu of flowers, the family would appreciate donations for migrant worker concerns to which Alfred was a passionate advocate.

WE DESIGN OBITUARY FOR FREE.

Message of Thanks

We, the family and relatives of the late

MARILYN E. LLAPITAN

who joined her Creator on November 29, 2004 in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

sincerely convey our gratitude and appreciation to all those who offered Masses and prayers, condoled with and comforted us in our moment of grief.

Parents **Roland & Pacita**; brother **Bob**; sisters **Dina, Gigi, Marvie** and **Pinky**; in-laws **Cathy, Leo, Nestor & Willy**; nephews and nieces **Keyo & Cherry, Ayetz, Aika, Kisses, Yetyet, Bob-j, Katrina, Roby & Marky**; grandchild **Trent**.

Engr. LUDOVICO B. VISTA

Born: March 13, 1921

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on January 4, 2005 at the age of 83.

His children, in-laws & grandchildren request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at 396 Salcedo Street, Noveleta, Cavite.

Interment will be on Saturday, January 8, 2005 at Love Memorial Park, Noveleta, Cavite at 2:30 p.m.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord." 2 Corinthians 5:8

CLASSIFIEDS

BMHI
BCDA Management and Holdings, Inc.

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY & TO BID

BCDA Management & Holdings, Incorporated (BMHI) invites interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid for the **supply and delivery** of materials for the Repair and Rehabilitation of PNP/ NAPOLCOM Awarded Units in Pamayanang Diego Silang, Ususan, Taguig. The approved budget for the contract is ***PESOS: Three Million Three Hundred Thousand Pesos & 00/100 (Php3,300,000.00)*** chargeable against BMHI.

Interested parties are required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the Chairperson, BMHI Procurement, Bids and Awards Committee (BMHI-PBAC) at the Small Conference Room, Main Lobby, BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st Street Corner 2nd Avenue, Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, Metro Manila, on or before **5:00 PM** of **January 10 to 17, 2005**. The **deadline for the submission of LOI** is on **5:00 PM of 17 January 2005**. The LOI should state the Company's name, address and Contact person directly employed by the company. Interested Suppliers must secure the Bid Documents and Terms of Reference for a non-refundable fee of ONE THOUSAND PESOS (Php1,000.00).

For additional information or clarification, please call **Atty. Peter Paul Andrew T. Flores** at **816-0989 or 816-0990**.

(Sgd.) **GLORIA GEORGINA DJ. JOTA**
BMHI – PBAC Chairperson

(PDI--Jan. 7 & 14, 2005)

SULTAN KUDARAT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Tacurong City

INVITATION TO BID

1. The Sultan Kudarat Electric Cooperative, Inc. (SUKELCO), is inviting interested supplier of:

   Make/Model : One (1) unit brand new **ISUZU D-MAX 4X4 M/T CREW CAB PICK-UP** with aircon & stereo, 3.0Li Direct Injection Turbo Intercooler Diesel Engine 5-speed Manual Transmission 2005 Model.

   - 3.0 Liter direct injection turbo intercooler
   - 5-Speed Manual Transmission
   - All power (steering, windows, side view mirrors)
   - Centralized door locks
   - 245/70 R16 tires with magwheels
   - With Drop-in Bedliner and Roll Bar
   - Silver Meter Panel, Power Control Bezel & Center Cluster
   - Rack and Pinion Steering System
   - With front & rear seatbelts
   - 1 DIN CD Stereo (Pioneer Audio)
   - With dual airbags
   - Keyless entry with anti-theft alarm
2. Deadline for submission of sealed bids shall be on **January 15, 2005.**
3. Submit sealed bids to:

   The Chairman
   Pre-Bids and Awards Committee
   Sultan Kudarat Electric Cooperative, Inc.
   Tacurong City
4. SUKELCO reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the cooperative.
5. Interested bidders may call **Mr. Rodrigo Alhambra** at telephone nos. 064-2003156 & 064-4770327 for further details.

Pre-Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI - Jan. 7 & 8, 2005)

Rush Sale

Office Condo Unit

Cityland Condominium 10 Tower 1
Unit 2414, 20th Floor, 6815 Ayala Avenue, Makati City
Floor Area = 65.56 square meters
Please call or text Ms. Jojo Punsal
0917-8332722

Restaurant Business and Rights for Sale

RUSH!

Php 350,000 negotiable
Fully Furnished within Intramuros
Near Letran, Lyceum, PLM, and Mapua
200 sq.m. incuding kitchen, with M/F Restrooms,
Excellent Business Opportunity

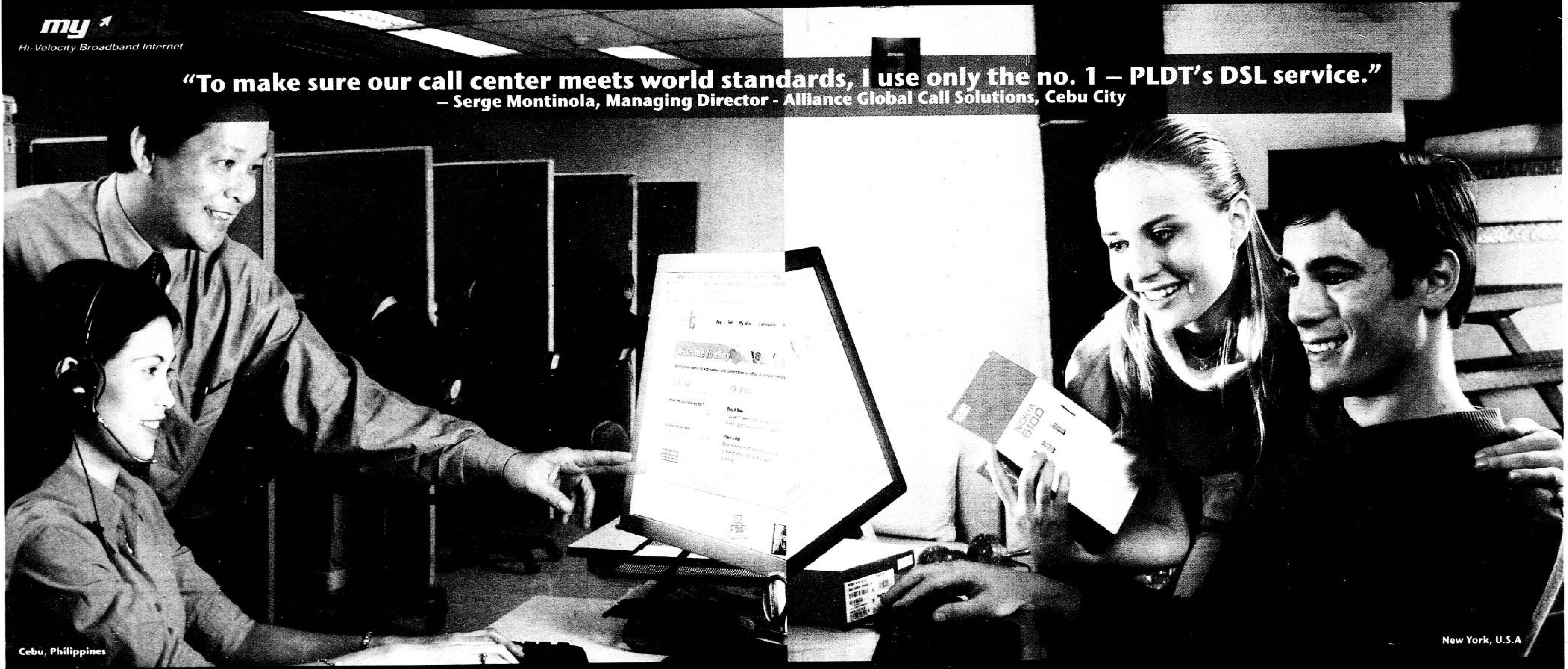
For inquiries, please call or text
Cindy Corro - 0917-3568202

my

Hi-Velocity Broadband Internet

"To make sure our call center meets world standards, I use only the no. 1 – PLDT's DSL service."

– Serge Montinola, Managing Director - Alliance Global Call Solutions, Cebu City



Keeping customers happy is the reason for being for Serge's company. He runs a call center that caters to customers in the United States. This is why his company relies on none other than Cebu's leading broadband service provider, PLDT myDSL. Fast and reliable connections make sure they're connected with their U.S. office all day, all night. And the unparalleled bandwidth that they can only get from myDSL gave him even greater results. "The U.S. Office now maintains its database here in Cebu. Everything is kept here and our counterparts in the U.S. access all the data thru DSL." This translates to more business opportunities for Serge. "myDSL has been very consistent in their service. They have helped our company grow and soon, we will be expanding from a 25-seat call center to a larger operation." No wonder 8 out of 10 choose myDSL over any other broadband provider.

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Smallbiz Jr.	768 KBPS	8,000	TWO
Smallbiz Sr.	1 MBPS	14,500	THREE

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*All prices are VAT exclusive
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FASHION resolutions /C4

LIFESTYLE

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph
Text us your feedback: inquirer life name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

P99
DUNKIN' DONUTS
RAINBOW
Choco Rings

Editor's *rave* Board

LIFE OF THE PARTY. Twilight silk V-neck ruffle blouse, cappuccino heathered sharkskin wide leg trousers; oat wool multi-tweed long coat with patch pockets and fur trim, cappuccino silk camisole with beaded lace detail, cappuccino silk knee-length bias cut skirt; star silk sequin short-sleeve V-neck top, indigo sexy boot-cut jeans

TIED UP. Twinkle scalloped silk sleeveless draped front dress; black multi-pocket leather jacket, asphalt long-sleeve cotton T-shirt with gothic embroidery, black cotton jeans; black-and-white striped jacquard shirt, gray silk tie, black five-pocket cotton corduroy pants

LEG ROOM. Twilight silk tiered ruffle skirt, twilight pearlized leather velvet starla sandal; dell flirty lace skirt with grosgrain waistband and silk lining, antique metal stelle sandal; oat wool tweed skirt with flared hem, dell kid suede velvet stasia sandal

La prima Donna

THE FAVORITE four letters of fashionistas, DKNY, might as well spell "cool" because no one sets trends in glam and street wear quite like Donna Karan.

Among the more recent bold steps she has taken, the famed style-setter launched her Spring/Summer 2005 collection at a swanky Manhattan café using no live models. Instead mannequins sat around tables and the bar making like a stylish Sunday brunch crowd. Her publicity photos for the recent holidays focused as well on her stunning clothes and accessories, almost completely cutting the models' heads and faces out of the pictures.

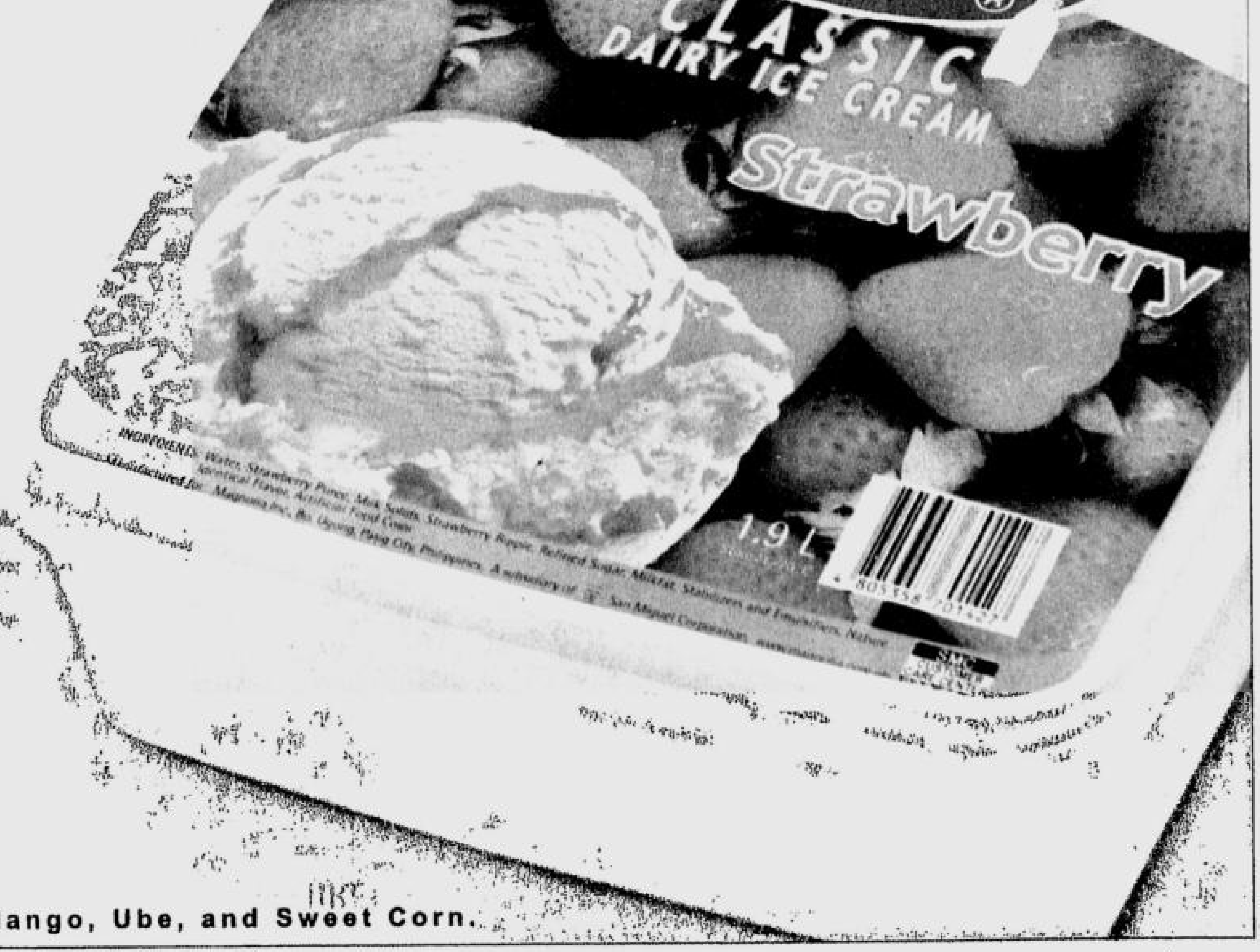
None of this, of course, is unusual for la prima Donna. What else can you expect from New York's most celebrated designer, who simplified women's fashion with her innovative seven-piece system of dressing, not to mention her trademark bodysuit?

DKNY is exclusively distributed by Stores Specialists, Inc, located at the Power Plant Mall, Rustan's Makati, 158 Designers' Blvd., and Greenbelt 4, Ayala Center. *CBF*

COLD SHOULDER. Twinkle three-button easy shrug, twilight cami with beaded lace, twilight silk tiered ruffle skirt; cream cashmere silk cozy, cappucino silk camisole with beaded lace detail, cappuccino flirty lace skirt with grosgrain waistband and silk lining; star sequined wool snug, star scalloped silk camisole with pintucks, star scalloped silk long skirt with pintucks

"MAGKITA TAYO MAMAYA HA."

See-Thru Window, only in
new Magnolia Ice Cream.
Para kitang-kita mo ang sarap
ng tunay na ice cream.

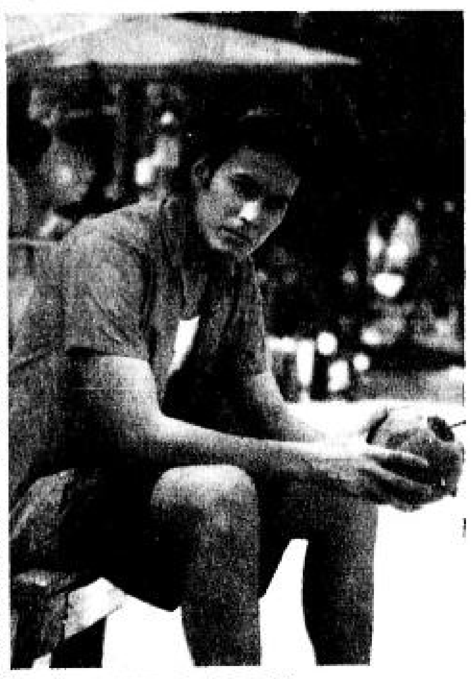


Magnolia
CLASSIC
DAIRY ICE CREAM
Magpakailanman Magnolia.

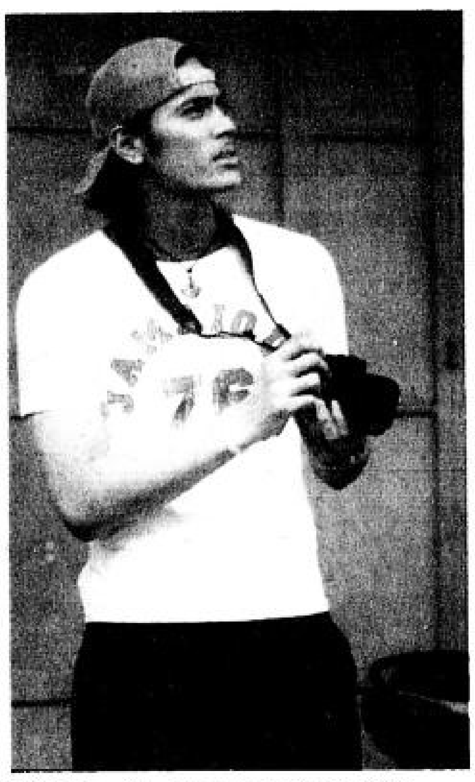
In Chocolate, Strawberry, Vanilla, Mango, Ube, and Sweet Corn.

Beach COOL

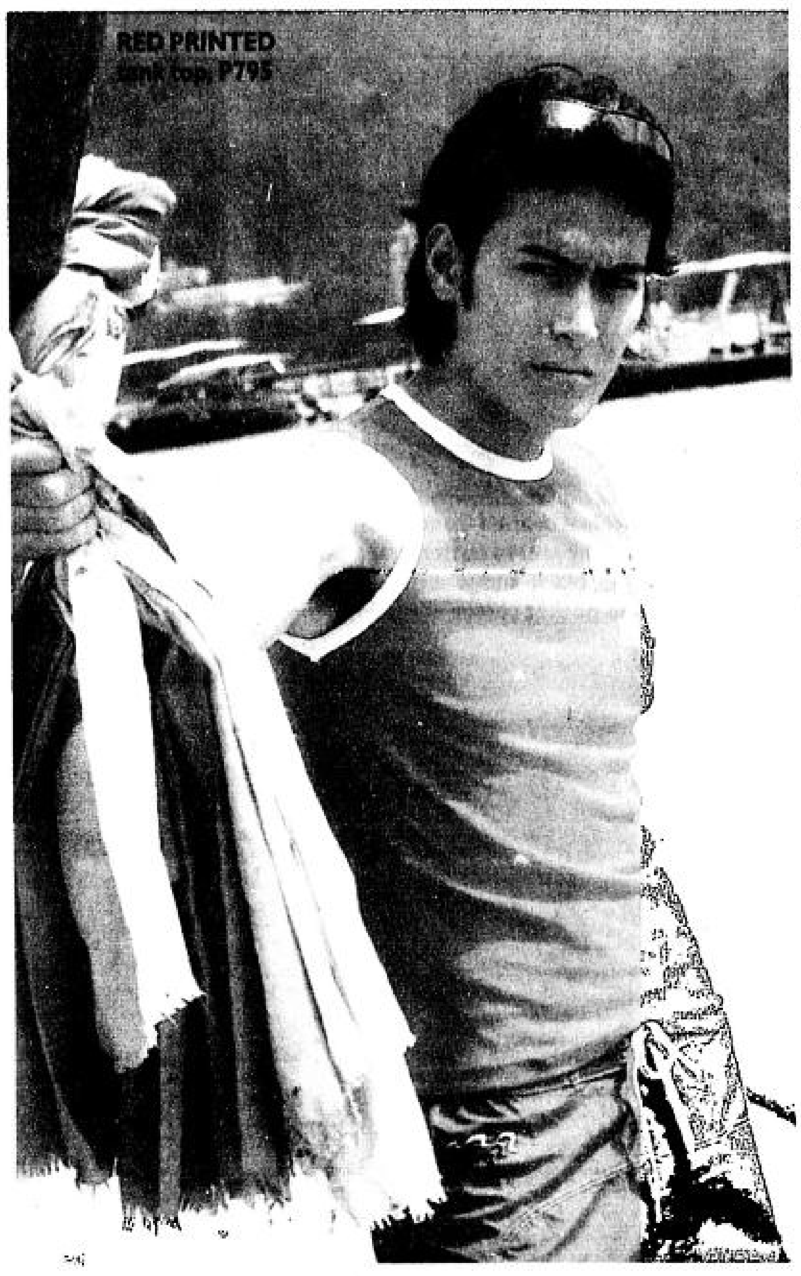
All-male brand Celio went to the beach recently. On the shores of Phuket, Thailand, it unveiled its latest collections. The stylish man should not miss up on the season's newest



AQUA-BLUE polo, P2,295



WHITE printed rounded shirt, P1,295



RED PRINTED tank top, P795

JAMAICAN-INSPIRED yellow shirt with print, P1,295

NAVY-BLUE tank top with print, P795

Mobile Mania offers discounts on handsets

CUSTOMERS can visit any of the 18 Semicon branches nationwide to avail of the zero-percent interest plan when they purchase a Sony Ericsson handset. The zero-percent interest rate will also apply to three-month and six-month deferred payment schemes for their Sony Ericsson handset purchase. This special offering from Sony Ericsson is until Jan. 30. Semicon branches in Metro Manila are in Power Plant Mall, The Podium, Festival Supermall, Cyberone Mall Eastwood and SM City North Edsa, SM Megamall, SM City Fairview, SM Southmall and SM Centerpoint. The Semicon showroom is in Cainta, Rizal. Provincial branches are in Baguio City, Cagayan de Oro City, SM City Pampanga, SM Lucena, SM City Cebu, SM City Iloilo and SM City Davao.

GOINGS ON

CONCERTS. Paco Park Presents opens its 2005 concert season with pianist Andrew Brian Sapigao taking center stage today at 6 p.m. Admission is free.

DANCE Concert Company, Vella Damian School of Classical Ballet, IDMM Ballet School and College of St. Benilde-Filipinescas Dance Company bring to life selections from "Nutcracker Ballet Suite" on Jan. 9, 5 p.m., at Rizal Park Open-Air Auditorium, Manila. Admission is free.

WORKSHOPS. The Federation of Philippine Photographers Foundation will conduct a series of basic and advanced photo courses on Jan. 8 and 9, Feb. 12 and 13, at Fort Santiago, Intramuros, Manila. Call 8435341 or 8137420.

AMATEUR and professional photographers are invited to attend the workshops of Photoworld Manila 2005 on Feb. 4-7 at Asian Institute of Management, Paseo de Roxas, Makati. Call 8137420 or 8435341.

TAPPING the Creative Universe workshops will be held on Jan. 24, 26, 28 31; Feb. 2 and 4, 7-9 p.m. The seminars will be held in Rockwell Club, Amorsolo Street, Makati. Call 4265375 or 9290230.

PERFORMANCE. Swedish jazz group The Sliding Hammers and jazz guitarist Andreas Pettersson will perform on Jan. 12 at Merk's Bar Bistro. Call 7574720 or 7574721.

SALE. Freeway, Ensembles, Solo and 22 BC will be having a Clearance Sale on Jan. 14-Feb. 13 at all its branches nationwide.

PROMO. Citibank Most Preferred Brands promo is ongoing until Jan. 31. To join, cardholders must text the word "CITI" and the last 10 digits of their credit card and send it to 2366. They will then receive a text message confirming the receipt of their registration. A cardholder may win in the grand raffle on March 3. Visit www.citibank.com.ph

GIFT-GIVING. Chinese Monk recently treated the kids and staff of The Children's Hour to lunch, gifts and games. The restaurant also donated P50,000 to Children's Hour Foundation, Inc.

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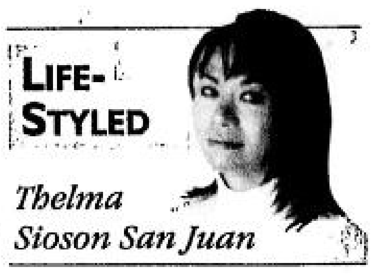
See mechanics posters for details

Pearls of Boracay, miracle cosmetic for balding women and other '04 finds


LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

OVER AND OVER. That's how the yearend disaster was played on television until you got catastrophe-fatigued. Yet you remained incredulous of the enormity of the Asian tragedy, no matter the endless parade of grim images. But then the choice would have been to switch to the **Osang-Lolit Solis** mudfest playing out on two channels. So no choice really, stick to the natural tsunami.

At the dawn of another year, the news ranged from bad to sad, and more sad. That was why it was a refreshing New Year's Day bonus to catch, on Knowledge Channel, the rerun of "Noli Me Tangere," the landmark film production of Cultural Center of the Philippines which then CCP executive Nicanor Tiongson, with the late CCP president Bing Roxas, valiantly pursued in 1992.

You saw on screen again the faces of **Rolando Tinio** (as Pilosopong Tasio), **Tony Mabesa, Ruben Rustia, Ray Ventura, Lorli Villanueva** and other theater treasures, alongside the younger **Joel Torre** and **Chin Chin Gutierrez.**

I remembered the behind-the-scene tales of that production, which Rolando regaled us with then—a stimulating mix of hilarious anecdotes and inspiring examples of Filipino artistry.

As I watched "Noli," its beautiful, rich setting in Vigan, I realized yet again that the Philippines has genuine wealth in its artists and culture that the local audience should keep on rediscovering, and the global audience must discover. We are not that poor nor that backward—nor that dumbed down.

It wasn't such a bad start of the year, after all. Last year brought us other newsy finds, which you can use way into '05:

- **Pearls of Boracay.** I don't mean **Louie Cruz,** although in more figurative ways than one, this ex-Makati-party-maker-turned-island-party-maker is a true gem.

Way before the holiday deluge in Boracay last year, we lazed on the beach with friends like Louie, **Mike Rieta** and **Sam Eduque.** The drizzle was building into a mild downpour—it was that off-season—when the pearl vendors sought shelter in our cabana.

Right there and then I got my pearl bargains of a lifetime—a two-strand choker for only six grand, very small pearl studs for P70 a pair, "siopao" pearls for a little more than a P100, and so on, the prices would make Greenhills *tiangge* prices seem astronomical. (And I'm a better nagger than haggler.)

Despite the rock-bottom prices from these Muslim vendors, I wouldn't have bought the pearls had not Sam been there to choose for me. If you didn't know, Sam is one of Manila's most stylish women who love pearls. Simple yet very elegant pearl accessorizing has been her trademark. She knows her pearls so I needed her nod that the Boracay pearls are indeed good, if not the best, buys.

Turned out, many of Metro Manila's socialites (who shall go unnamed here) get their pearl bargains from their Muslim *suki* in Boracay. Some of these purchases, I learned, run to millions of pesos, with—note this—the Muslim traders allowing these women to bring home and wear the goods without so much as a contract; word of honor would do. So the next time you're in Bora, check out the pearl-trading going on along the beach, and choose your own *suki*.

- **Another pearl.** The official Boracay pearl, of course, is Pearl of the Pacific. What we discovered there recently was its Neo Spa, which is so good. In **Budji Layug**'s minimalist Asian interiors, you get a massage in a cozy room that looks out onto the sea.

If the crowd on the beachfront where you can get trampled on is not for you, the peace and tranquility of the Neo Spa room is for you then. It has a calming view of the sea as you get rubbed on, the clean line and elegant wood furniture of a Budji interiors, and a good massage menu, from the Island Lomi Lomi, lymphatic drainage massage, body bronzer (pre-sun treatment) to an island detox package, virgin coconut scrub.

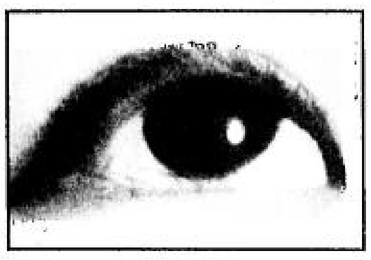
NEO SPA'S ocean view

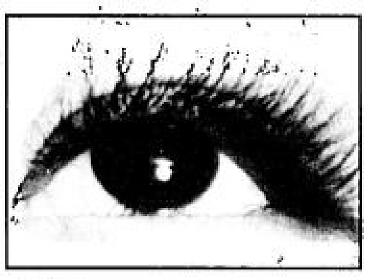
After the massage, you can have your candle-lit dinner on the shore, at a table laden with chili crab from Louie and Mike's McSandro, the Pearl's chef **Tony Castro**'s pasta and other Asian fusion dishes, hopeful that the evening would stay star-lit, which it did. Then came the holidays and, in Louie's words, the tsunami of people.

- **Good whitening.** By now you should know that whitening products don't really "whiten," they clarify the skin, even its tone, give it a glow. To ask for something more drastic than this is to be courting trouble.

A good whitening and moisturizing line, I discovered in '04, is Shu Uemura. I've tried many, but I found that Shu's advantage is it really revitalizes your skin yet it's hardly there—it's that fine and smooth, from the moisturizing to the sunblock to the whitening. It's neither thick nor sticky so that it blends well with your foundation or powder. I've stopped using the line from my "derma," and instead use only my "derma's" anti-pimple cream which I combine with Shu Uemura. I believe this brand suits the Filipina skin.

- **Eyelash extension.** This must be the latest salvation for many vain women out there. I didn't believe it until one Sunday afternoon, at **Ricky Reyes'** One on One, I saw the women, almost in a queue, wanting to have it. This doesn't look at all like the falsies from the '60s. The eyelash is glued on your eyelash—strand by strand—so that it looks natural, as if you've just applied an extra-lush mascara. I haven't tried one yet, no time, but many girls are having it.

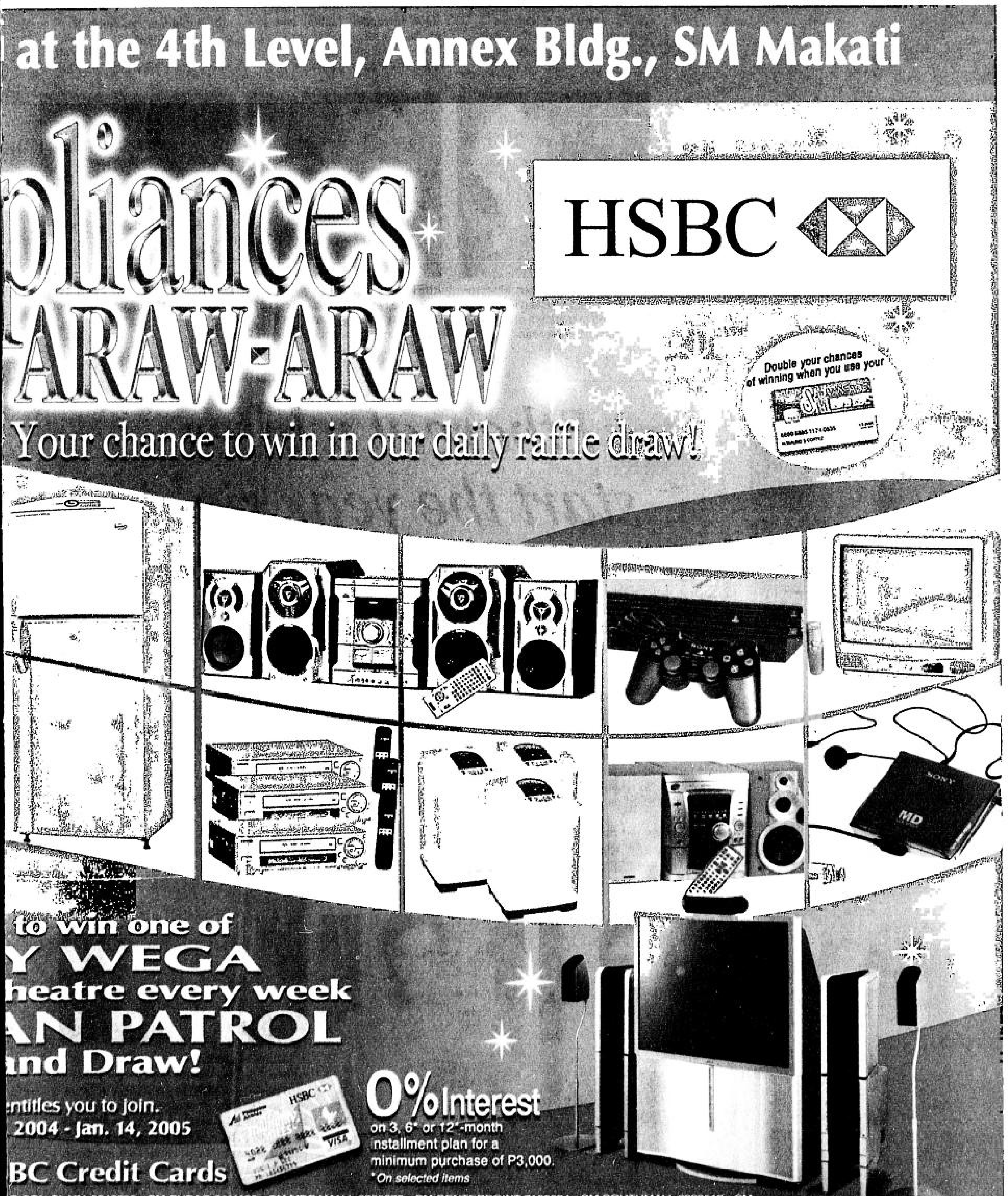

BEFORE


AFTER

- **Hair enhancement system.** This is my good news to some of my friends—men and women—who have thinning spots. That afternoon, I saw Ricky spray it on the thinning crown of one woman, then sprinkle its fiber, and spray it again. The bald spot was gone. The cotton fiber (following the same formula as cotton candy) has spread to cover the bald spot. It's a safe cosmetic product that's good until your next shampoo. I know it'll be a miracle find for many men and women.

More next week.

E-mail the author at tsanjuan@skyinet.net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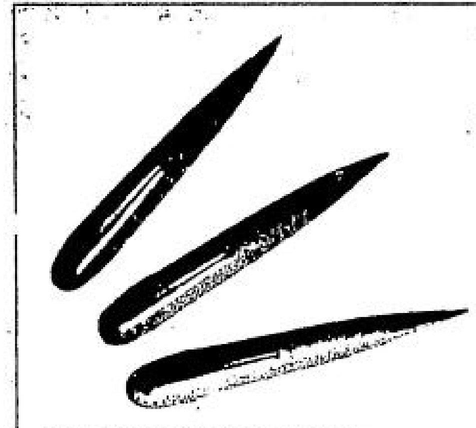

COLORED PENHODLERS. Blue Leather, Red Leather and Natural Calf

High-end pens

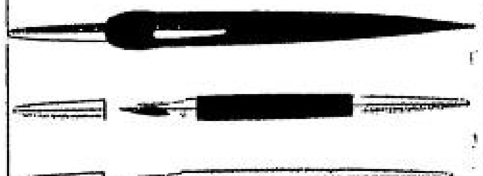
JORG HYSEK'S collection of high-end pens and penholders features interchangeable ballpoints, smoother ink flow fountain pens and diamond-studded pen barrels.

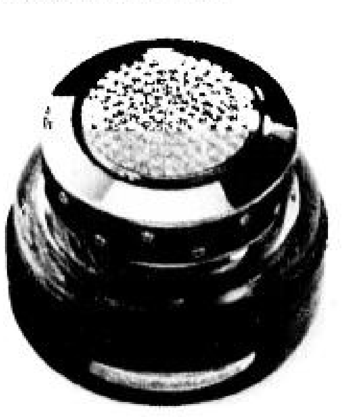
The fountain pens boast of a new angle tip that allows for smoother ink flow, and come in five nib widths. They have a quick-change mechanism that allows switching from extra fine to extra broad writing in a matter of seconds.

Hysek's pens are made from high-tech carbon fiber—the same material used in everything from Boeings to Ferraris. Carbon fiber is widely known for its durability, strength and light weight.

Twelve separate colored leather penholders are also available. They come in various styles, from the wild Orange Alligator to the more subtle Black Leather.

Jorg Heisek pens are exclusively available at the Rafael Jewellery, 2/L, Shangri-La Plaza Mall (tel. 6363398), and Rafael Jewellery, Mezzanine Level Makati Shangri-La Hotel (8138501).


DIPPING PENS. Black Leather Holder, Black Laquer, Silver Finish


JEWELLED INKWELL. Diamond Top and Band in Black Alligator

2005 fashion resolutions

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberin-Sadhwani

THE YEAR 2004 was an exciting one in fashion. It was all about individual style and creating some irony by mixing highs and lows. As always, the only thing constant was change.

Here we are facing the New Year with a whole lot of stylish new ideas and concepts to look forward to.

What fashion resolutions have you made so far? I, for one, will do my best to purge and organize my closet (my husband will probably say this is a Herculean task). I will also try to support the local fashion industry by buying Philippine-made accessories and going to our local, extremely talented designers for my sartorial needs. Finally, I strongly resolve to write my column regularly, so help me God!

I asked some of my favorite industry denizens to share their resolutions with us. So while you're deciding what yours are, take inspiration from these.

E-mail the author at apsadvice@hotmail.com

TIPPI Ocampo, designer: To have fun and celebrate Filipino design aesthetics more. Instead of looking to other cultures for inspiration, I will try to be more aware of Philippine materials, colors, patterns, etc., and interpret them in a more modern way.

RANDY Ortiz, designer: I promise to be more health conscious. Also, to cut down on shopping, but travel to more exotic places with friends. I would also like to take special courses on cutting and pattern making and probably take French lessons, as well. I just wish I could find the time to do all these things.

PATTY Betita, image consultant/modeling coach: I have decided to incorporate more vibrant colors, which I can mix and match, into my wardrobe. Too much black, gray or brown is boring. Pink, green, yellow, fuchsia, gold, silver, orange and red will be predominant in my clothes, bags, shoes and accessories. This way, I'll look and feel younger. Plus, I've added yellow and honey streaks on my hair, too!

MYRZA Sison, editor in chief, Cosmopolitan magazine: My fashion resolution is to organize—no, make that do a major overhaul of—my closet so that I can get dressed quickly and more systematically every morning and so that I can keep track of everything I have in order to avoid fashion emergencies during important dress-or-die occasions.

WENDY Puyat, graphic designer/designer for Lily: I want to try new things such as new shapes and fabrics while experimenting with prints and texture. I'd also like to be more adventurous and to keep on enjoying fashion!

IVAR Aseron, designer: I will invest even more time in improving my craft. Also, aside from my usual browns, beiges and whites, I will use more colors creatively.

RORIE Carlos, fashion editor, Preview magazine: Aside from stocking up on cool exercise togs to inspire more trips to the gym, I resolve to buy a ridiculous amount of gorgeous undergarments. I want to wear a new set every day without repeating for a whole month!

JENNI Epperson, creative director, INQUIRER Just Shop/ TV Host, Lifestyle Network "Good Finds": Resolutions only last as fast as the Jelly Kelly trend but in the spirit of tradition and the goal to try to improve one's self, here are mine:

Resolution No. 1: Old skirts are my new dresses… purview is the key!

Resolution No. 2: In the Year of the Rooster, fashion survival is crucial; essentially accessories will be my oases.

Resolution No. 3: I promise to buy jeweled flats and stilettos worth not more than P2,000. Window-shopping is my new extreme sport.

BLUE Carreon, fashion and style editor, Philippine Tatler:

To refrain from buying clothes that are too "of the moment." Instead, purchase investment pieces that are excellently cut and made from high-quality fabrics.

To support our local designers more because there is so much talent around.

To steer clear of online shopping.

To buy more blazers for whenever I'm in the mood to channel Jude Law in "Alfie."

JAPPY Gonzalez, Homme et Femme: To try and get out of my uniform—T-shirt, jeans and sneakers!

RAYA Mananquil, fashion model: My fashion resolution for 2005 is to dress for comfort. I think I've endured stilettos long enough!.

LIZA Ilarde-Cuenca, editor in chief, Mega magazine: To finally turn the spare room in our flat into a walk-in closet. Promise, this year!

LULU Tan Gan, designer: My resolution is to be consistent in the research and preparation of my design collections, three seasons ahead of time!

RHETT Eala, designer: I will make more of an effort to dress up rather than dress down. I'll wear Prada rather than Pumas, Louis rather than Levis.

IZZA Gonzales-Agana, stylist: Tone down on my shopping! That's about it!

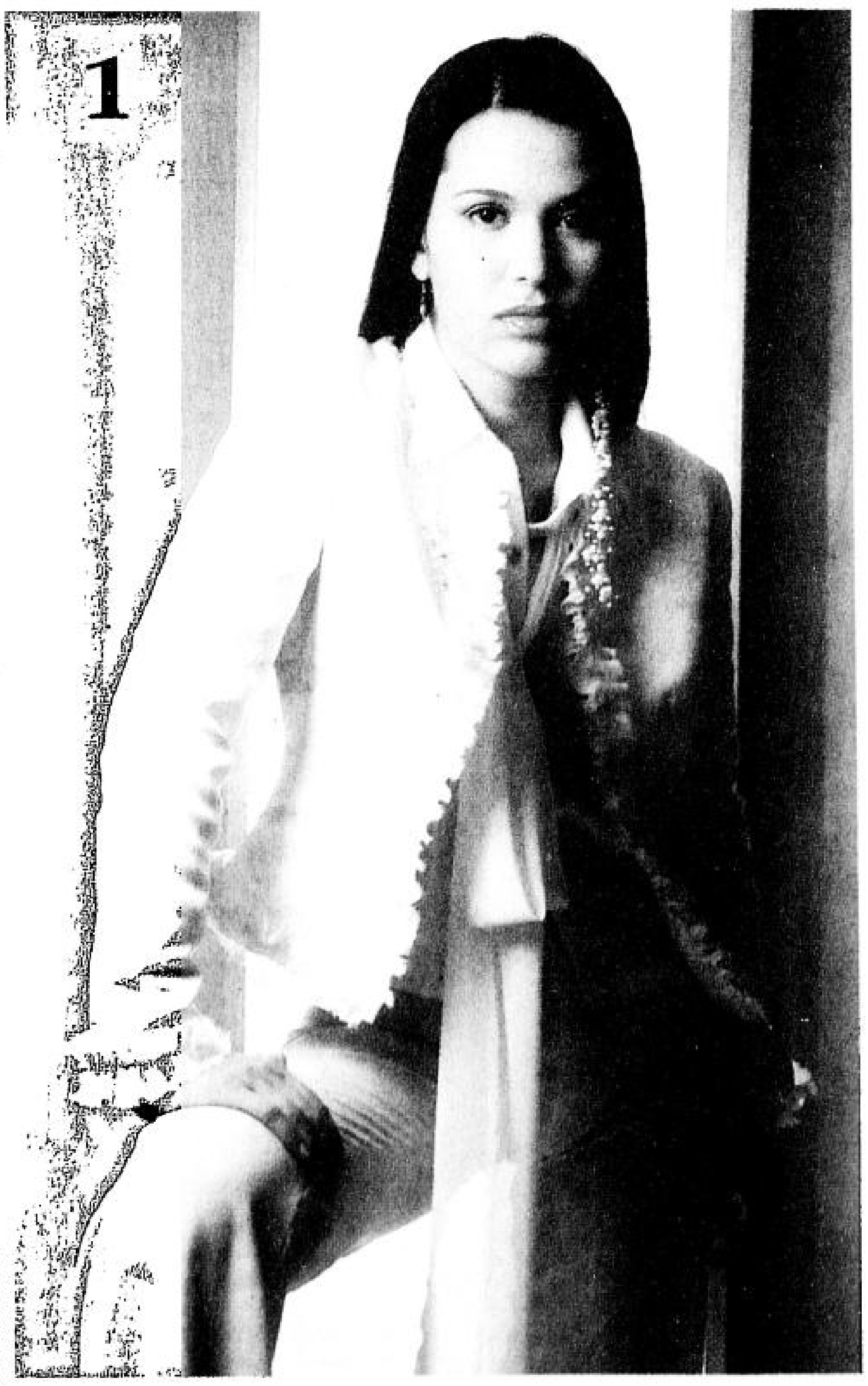
Ethereal whites start the year right

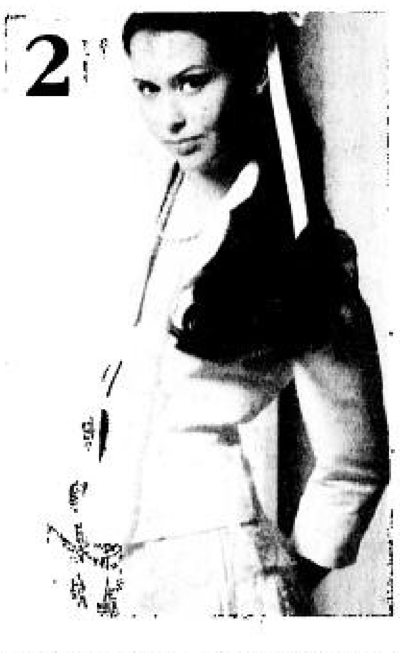
MIKE de la Rosa's latest collection for the SM Boutique Square has been described as "ethereal."

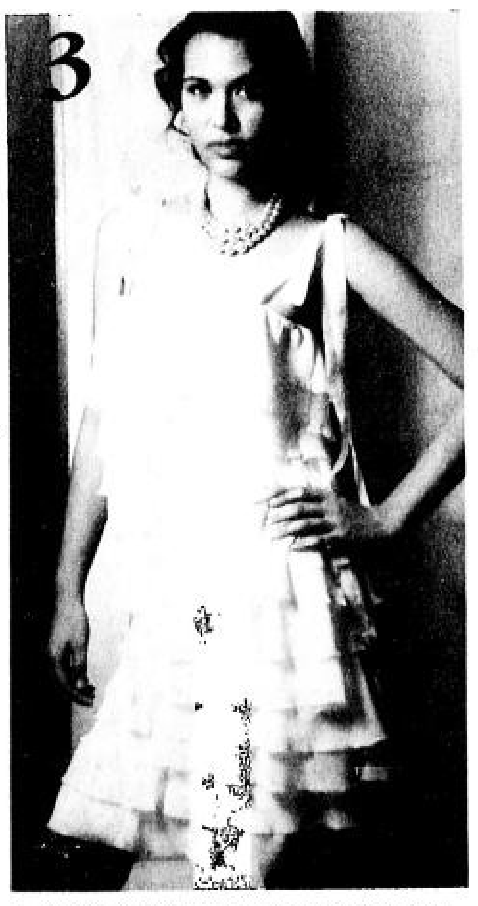
Black and neutrals take a backseat as De la Rosa fashions clothes in pristine white. "White is alluring and captivating," he says. "It inspires feelings of a pure kind of sexiness, of elegance."

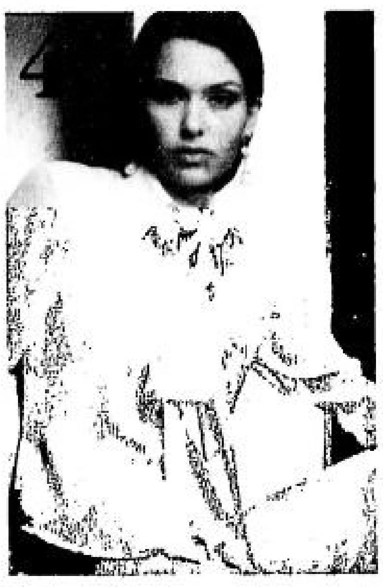
De la Rosa achieves an incredible lightness of being with soft fabrics like chiffon, lace, crepe, and shantung that float, flirt and flatter.

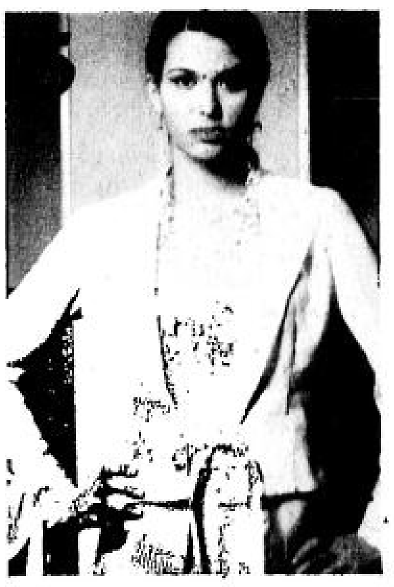
Ruffles, bows and ribbons add a touch of romance, while distress hemlines and layering give the clothes a modern edge.











1. LONG-SLEEVED shantung jacket with ruffled detailing worn over a long-sleeved button-down chiffon top with bow accents and pants; 2. Quarter-sleeved jacket with bow-tie accents worn with a three-layered lace skirt; 3. Bow-strapped layered and ruffled dress; 4. Long-sleeved button-down chiffon top with bow-tie accent worn with pants; 5. V-Neck lace inner top worn under a long-sleeved jacket with ribbon and bow accents worn with crepe pants

LIFESTYLE Beauty

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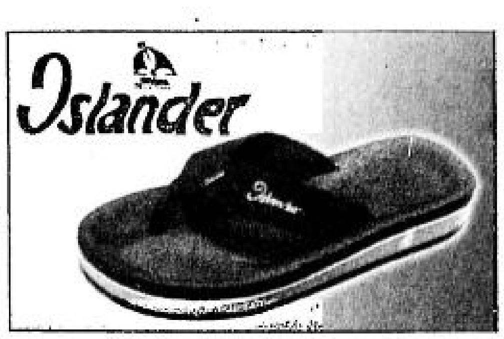
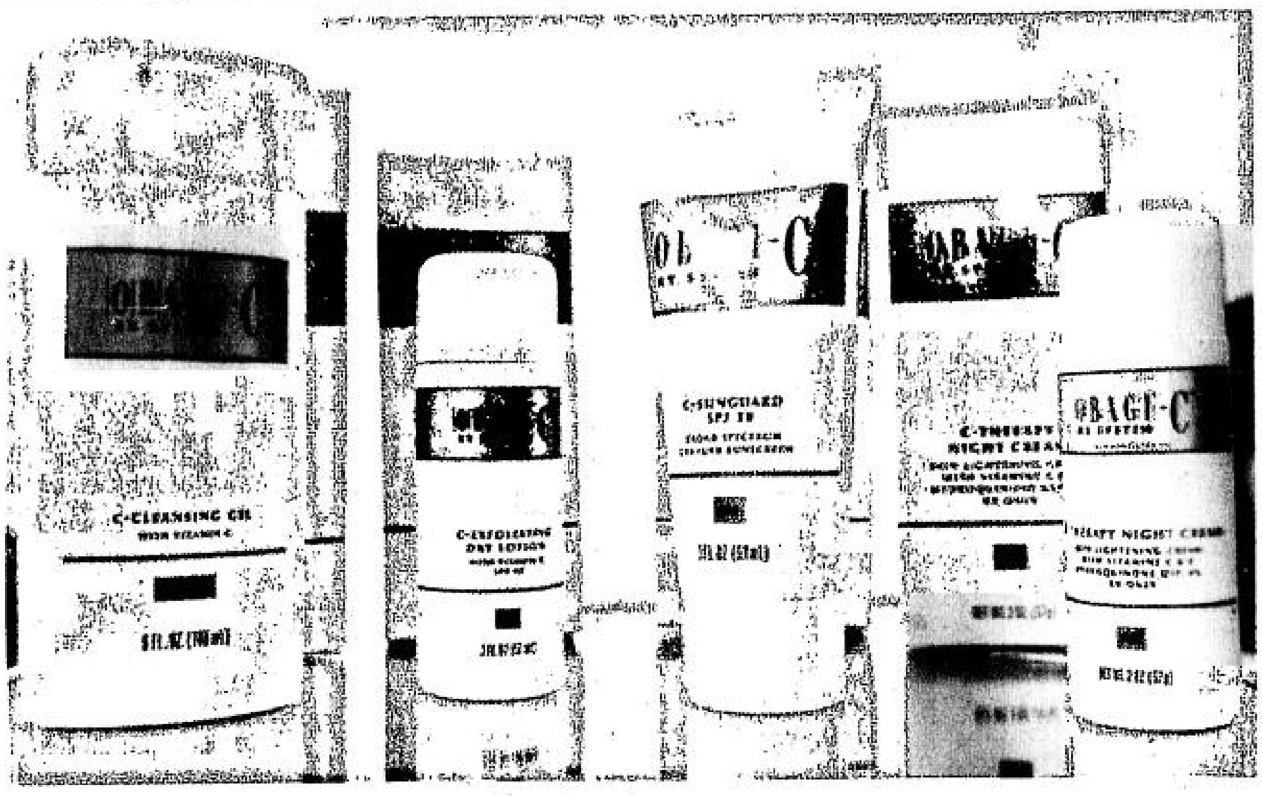
Text us your feedback:
inquirer life name/city/message to
2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)


Islander



WHITENING system without the bleach (left) and Dr. Zein Obagi (below)

PHOTOS: JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Truly skin-deep

By Alex Y. Vergara

A SMOOTHER, whiter and more radiant face is now possible, says the makers of a new Vitamin C-based skin-care regimen. The system, which goes by the name of Obagi-C, is not to be confused with its forerunner, Obagi Nu-Derm.

Unlike most over-the-counter brands, Obagi-C is a prescription drug reportedly formulated to penetrate deep into the skin to regulate melanin-producing cells, enhance collagen production and cleanse impurities that hinder the face from achieving a natural healthy glow.

"Obagi-C is not a bleaching system," says American dermatologist Zein Obagi. "Like a bullet, it delivers superior penetration to all levels of the skin, resulting in 'Photolumines' skin."

It took the Los Angeles-based Obagi and his team 18 years to work on Nu-Derm. With the system's rudiments in place, he spent another three years to come up with Obagi-C, which consists of such key elements as hydroquinone (4 percent), "professional strength" Vitamin C and glycolic acid.

"While Obagi Nu-Derm is corrective," says Dr. Obagi, "[Obagi] C is preventive. I formulated it to help maintain the condition of healthy skin. At the same time, those who have just been through Nu-Derm can later switch to Obagi-C for maintenance."

During a recent Asian swing to introduce the product, the soft-spoken doctor made Manila his first stop. The Philippines, he says, have always had a special place in his heart because several of his staffers in his Beverly Hills clinic are Filipino-Americans.

Dr. Obagi also reviewed the results of a six-week study conducted by Filipino dermatologists, who administered Obagi-C on 10 local patients. He was pleased with the results, as it once more proved his system's safety and efficacy even on "sensitive Asian skin."

Asian treatment

For the longest time, he says, Western dermatologists didn't know how to properly deal with Asian patients. Not a few doctors, including Obagi, consider Oriental skin sensitive and, thus, easily prone to bruising, scarring, pigmentation, keloid formation and what have you.

"That led me to create a program in skin rejuvenation that focuses beyond the skin's surface," Dr. Obagi adds. "We now go deep into the skin and allow it to repair itself beyond the surface to include every cell."

Since both Obagi Nu-Derm and Obagi-C are prescription drugs, both regimens require a trained doctor's supervision. Dr. Obagi also cautions people on buying Obagi products from questionable sources. They might end up with either worthless imitations or bogus products that can further damage their skin. The Belo Medical Group exclusively distributes Obagi products in the Philippines.

Like Obagi Nu-Derm, the Obagi-C system works on the principle of synergy. Thus, products meant for day (AM) are virtually combined by applying them one after the other, as are their nighttime (PM) counterparts. But unlike the former, Obagi-C doesn't bring about such side effects as reddening, burning sensation and peeling of the skin.

"Unless you're one in a million who's aller-

TRULY/D4

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See posters for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 2105 Series of 2004

The Maya Kitchen
CULINARY ARTS CENTER

SURVIVAL COOKING
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Learn a variety of easy-to-cook meals from appetizers and soups to main dishes and desserts. Yes, you can make them all from the basic ingredients found in your home - in 60 minutes or less! The Maya Kitchen will show the way to nutritious, economical and innovative cooking. After this course, you'll discover that you can eat whatever you like, whenever you want! Check out the schedule below and enroll now.

Survival Cooking Recipes: Jan. 15 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Hot & Sour Chicken Soup, Vegetable Tofu Soup, Oriental Chicken Salad, Baked Eggplant with Yogurt, Chicken Fruit & Pasta Salad, Carbonara, Superslaw & Waldorf Salad, Fishballs in Pesto Sauce, Beef Quesadillos, Fish Cacciatore Bacalao Style, Ginger Flan. Free Survival Cooking cookbook. P800.

Best Seller Sandwiches: Jan. 15 (Sat) 1:30 p.m. - 5 p.m. From Recipe Formulation, Dressing and plating with lecture on Proper Storing of Vegetables to increase shelf life and handling. Pastrami, Roast Beef ala Shawarma, Herbed Chicken, Clubhouse, Vegetarian Sandwich, Chef's Salad with Thousand Island Dressing, Caesar Salad, Honey Balsamic Dressing. P800.

Rice Toppings with home processed meat curing: Jan. 22 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Tapa Tips Garlic Rice, Native Longanisa Adobo Rice, Tocino Pineapple Rice, Tinapa Bagoong Rice, Crispy Corned Beef Kasubha Rice, Sweet & Sour Pork Parsleyed Rice, Tofu Teriyaki Rice. P800.

Snack Meals: Jan. 22 (Sat) 1:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Flaky Empanada, Garlic Beef Muffins, Chicken Tarts, Pandesal with Filling, Puto Pao. Bonus: Gulaman Palamig. P700.

Fastfood & Carinderia Business: Jan. 28-29 (F-S) 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Legal and technical requirements, capitalization, cost control and pricing, workflow, portioning and quantification, menu. Actual cooking preparation of popular Filipino dishes: 2 kinds of BBQ, Fresh Lumpia Ubod, Meatballs in Sweet Sour Sauce, Beef Tenderloin Strips in Oyster Sauce & Broccoli, Chicken Calderetta, Lengua Estofado, Pork Hamonado, Sweet Peas with Quail Eggs, Stuffed Squid, Lomi, Goto & Mami. P3,000.

Japanese Cooking: Jan. 29 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Miso Soup, Mixed Tempura, Sukiyaki, Kamameshi; assorted sushi: Kappamaki, Tekamaki, California Maki and Nigiri. P1,000 with free Japanese cookbook.

CERTIFICATE COURSES (Limited enrolment. Pre-registration required.)

Cooking I: Jan. 11-14 or 25-28 (T-F) 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; Nutrition and Nutritional Cooking; stocks, soups and sauces and its 1001 application to poultry, fish, shellfish, fruits and vegetables; common herbs and spices; purchasing; marketing and proper storage; menu planning; simple garnish and plate presentation. Plus actual cooking workshop on the preparation of dishes from appetizer to dessert. P4,000.

Baking I: Jan. 11-14 or 25-28 (T-F) 2:00 - 5:30 p.m. Basic basics of baking including techniques applied to preparation of bread, quickbread, pies, cakes and more. P3,000 with free cookbook.

Cake Decorating (Basic): Jan. 15 & 22 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Lecture-workshop on fundamentals of cake decorating: coloring, designing, template, icing (boiled, butter, caramel, chocolate, sugar icing); basic borders, jelly lettering, basic flower making, bunching. P3,000

Cooking 2: Jan. 18-21 (T-F) 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Review of Basic Culinary Principles; Meal Management; Knowledge of Herbs, Spices and Condiments; Basic Maintenance and Preservation of Food (Proper Receiving, Storage and Preparation); Menu Planning, Kitchen Accounting and Recipe Formulation; Actual Workshop on International Cuisine, Ethnic Cooking, Hors d'oeuvre, Salad, Cooked/Cured/Prepared food and Quick Desserts; Market Basket Activity. Free Maya Kitchen's Mix & Match 3 cookbook. P5,000.

For inquiries, visit the Maya Kitchen (Tuesdays thru Saturdays) at 8th floor, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (Pasay Road), Makati City or call tel. 892-1185 or 892-5011 loc. 108; or e-mail us at *mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph*

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Children's Wear	Jan.17-22	M-Sat	9-6
Men's Wear	Jan.24-29	M-Sat	9-6
Fashion Design	Jan.31-Feb.11	MWF	9-6
Basic Pattern	Feb.1-12	T-Th-Sat	9-6
Advance Pattern	Feb.14-19	M-Sat	9-6
Haute Couture	Feb.21-26	M-Sat	9-6

Fee - P8,000./course
10% discount for 2 courses or more
Designer Career Package P26,000.
(P6,500. / course - Jan.31-Feb.26 Mon-Sat 9-6)
Basic Fashion Design
Basic & Advance Pattern Making
Haute Couture Techniques
Sewing - Individual schedule Fee - P6000.
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"I used creams and different products to lighten my underarms but to no avail. That's why I was more than happy when I had LaserLight Hair Removal. It didn't only get rid of my unwanted hair for good -- it also whitened my underarms!

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Barbi Chan, Makeup Artist

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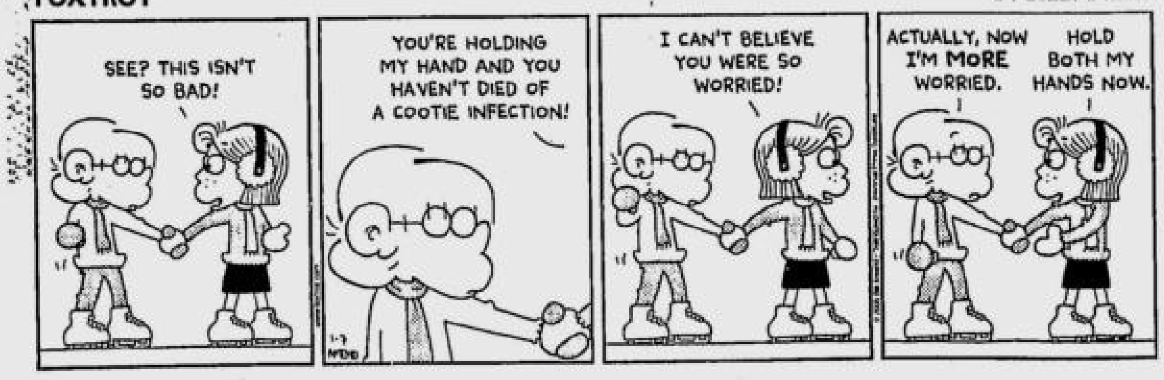
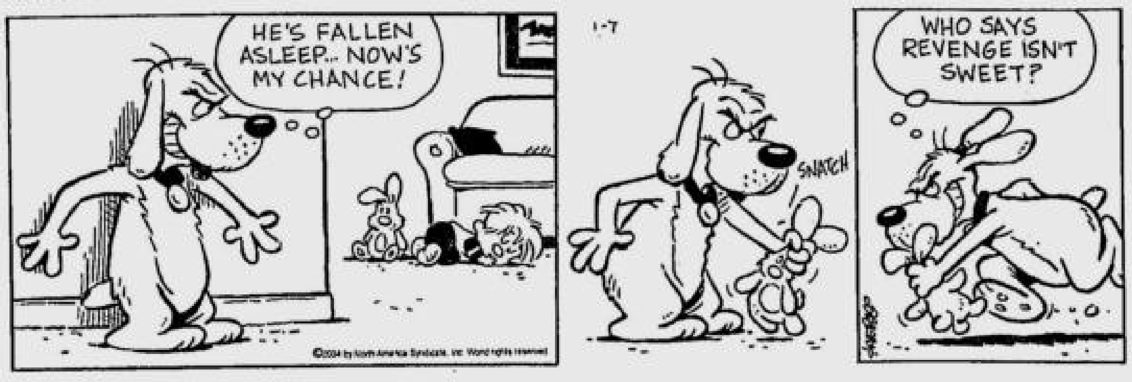
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


SEE? THIS ISN'T SO BAD!
YOU'RE HOLDING MY HAND AND YOU HAVEN'T DIED OF A COOTIE INFECTION!
1-7
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WERE SO WORRIED!
ACTUALLY, NOW I'M MORE WORRIED.
HOLD BOTH MY HANDS NOW.

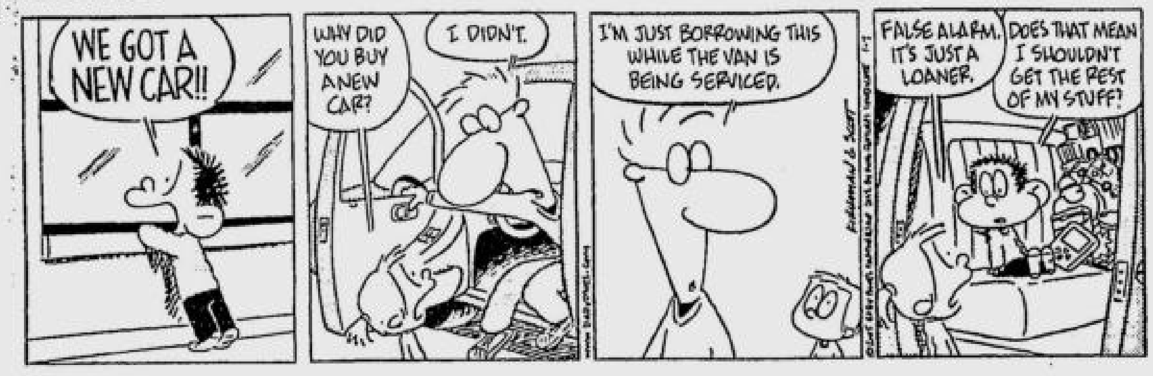
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


HE'S FALLEN ASLEEP.. NOW'S MY CHANCE!
1-7
SNATCH
WHO SAYS REVENGE ISN'T SWEET?

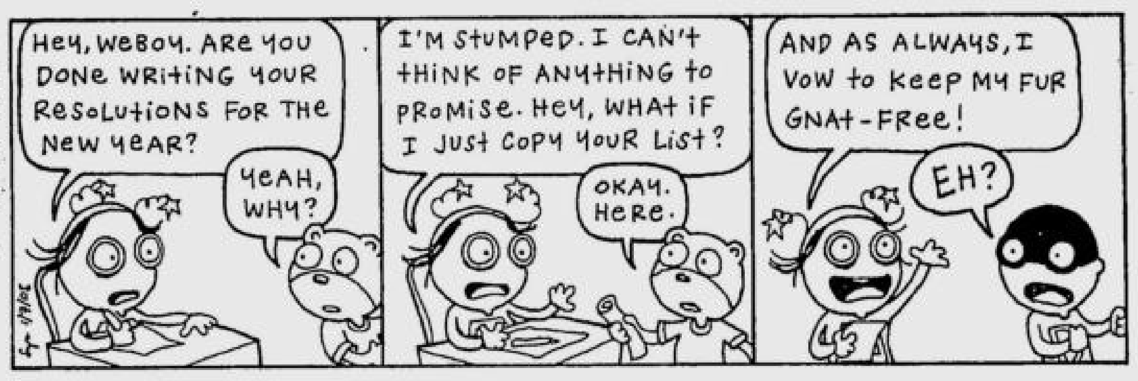
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WE GOT A NEW CAR!!
WHY DID YOU BUY A NEW CAR?
I DIDN'T.
I'M JUST BORROWING THIS WHILE THE VAN IS BEING SERVICED.
FALSE ALARM. IT'S JUST A LOANER.
DOES THAT MEAN I SHOULDN'T GET THE REST OF MY STUFF?

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, Weboy. Are you done writing your resolutions for the new year?
Yeah, why?
I'm stumped. I can't think of anything to promise. Hey, what if I just copy your list?
Okay. Here.
And as always, I vow to keep my fur gnat-free!
Eh?

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're an observer of the human condition. Basically, you like people. You understand what motivates them. This is why you are such a keen people watcher. You plan your life carefully. The year ahead is warm and social. Enjoy good friendships. Cozy partnerships are especially favored.
Birthdate of: Katie Couric, TV journalist; Nicolas Cage, actor; Zora Neale Hurston, folklorist/writer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Don't make promises to others—especially parents, VIPs and bosses—that you might not be able to keep. There's a tendency to stick one's neck out too far today!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Travel plans look grandiose and magnificent. Ditto for plans connected with education and legal matters. But are these plans realistic? Today, you might go a bit overboard.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You just want to have fun ! There's nothing wrong with this, but somebody still has to do the dishes. They don't go away by themselves. Keep this in mind kick up your heels.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Promises made to family members might be well-meaning, but they might be excessive. Don't promise something just because somebody else wants it.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Don't go overboard trying to please everyone at work today. You're doing everything at the 11th hour, and you're just too strung out. Relax!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You're inclined to be indulgent with children today. This is an easy thing to do because they are so sweet and endearing. At least don't make promises to them you cannot keep.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You have big ideas about what you want to do at home today. They might be connected with building, renovating or redecorating. Why not make them smaller and easier to do?

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You're thinking like a winner today. You feel positive, upbeat and confident. Don't let cocky confidence confuse your good judgment.

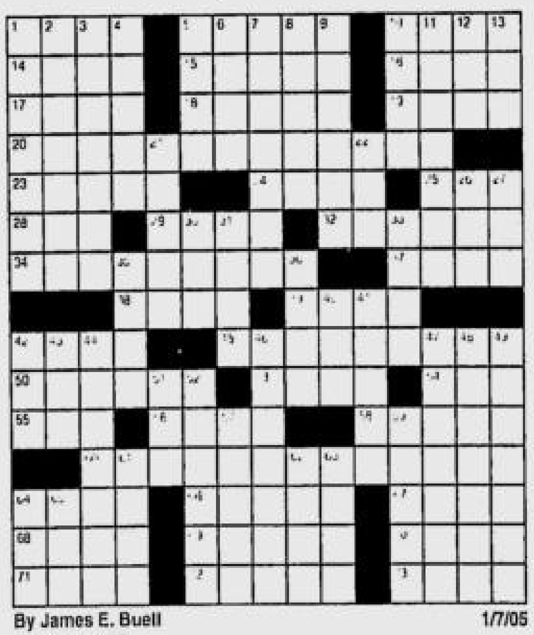
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): They say it takes money to make money. You like get-rich-quick schemes. Be careful today because you're tempted to blow your money on something. It might be good; but it might not.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Today you're tempted to try to do more than you can handle. On the other hand, you might be spurred on to attempt tasks you would not normally consider possible. (This could go either way.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You might have difficulty with others today. Some people might sound self-righteous or arrogant to you. Don't jump on this. Look for some kind of a common ground between you.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Don't overbook with friends and groups today. You can't do it all. Be careful of being too extravagant with others.

DAILY CROSSWORD

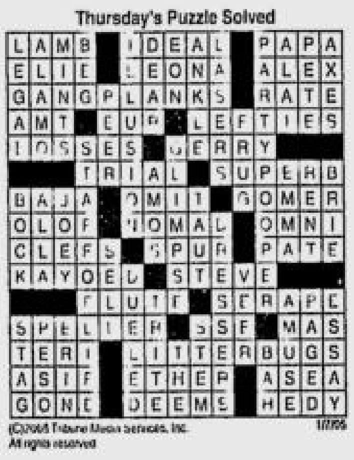


By James E. Buell
Edgewater, FL
1/7/05

ACROSS
1 Just like
5 High-minded
10 Magazine filler?
14 Olin or Horne
15 Nebraskan city
16 Person, place or thing
17 "Columbo" star
18 More modern
19 Scholarly volume
20 Frequently
23 Scales sign
24 Middle East gulf port
25 Hard and fast rule
28 Partner of to.
29 Fall guy
32 Smartly trim
34 With 45A, frequently
37 __-bitsy
38 Vega's constellation
39 Shoppe sign word
42 Stomach-soothing syrup
45 See 34A
50 Sites for fights
53 Heavens!
54 Liveliness
55 Spacey movie, with "The"
56 Stadium level
58 Mundane world
60 Frequently
64 Booted
66 Seat at the bar
67 Transvaal trekker
68 Epistle apostle
69 Breaks the news
70 Indy-winner Luyendyk
71 Pony up
72 What's just over a foot
73 Sardine containers

DOWN
1 Spanky's pal
2 Surrounded by ocean
3 Working on a birth day?
4 Hindu mendicant
5 Poet Van Duyn
6 Prophetic sign
7 Computer input
8 In the lead
9 Bigger than big
10 Con
11 Like nights in white satin?
12 Close-mouthed
13 Half and half
21 Shrewish
22 SNL's Gasteyer
26 Horse's relative
27 What for?
30 A part of us
31 Jai __
33 Dnieper port
35 Spirited self-assurance
36 "Portnoy's Complaint" author
40 NASA vehicle
41 Salon item
42 Turnpike cruiser
43 Mine find
44 Overlooked
46 Old Dominion University city
47 Based on hypothesis
48 Open up!
49 3D figures
51 24-hr. bank
52 Rest of the afternoon
57 Rusted through
59 Awaiting the pitch
61 Gathering dust
62 Damage done
63 Apart from this
64 Whirlpool tub
65 Solo of " Star Wars"

Thursday's Puzzle Solved



L	A	M	B	■	I	D	E	A	L	■	P	A	P	A
E	L	I	E	■	L	E	O	N	A	■	A	L	E	X
G	A	N	G	P	L	A	N	K	S	■	R	A	T	E
A	M	T	■	E	U	R	■	L	E	F	T	I	E	S
L	O	S	S	E	S	■	G	E	R	R	Y	■	■	■
■	■	■	T	R	I	A	L	■	S	U	P	E	R	B
B	A	J	A	■	O	M	I	T	■	G	O	M	E	R
O	L	O	F	■	N	O	M	A	D	■	O	M	N	I
C	L	E	F	S	■	S	P	U	R	■	P	A	T	E
K	A	Y	O	E	D	■	S	T	E	V	E	■	■	■
■	■	■	F	L	U	T	E	■	S	C	R	A	P	E
S	P	E	L	L	E	R	■	S	S	F	■	M	A	S
T	E	R	I	■	L	I	T	T	E	R	B	U	G	S
A	S	I	F	■	E	T	H	E	R	■	A	S	E	A
G	O	N	E	■	D	E	E	M	S	■	H	E	D	Y

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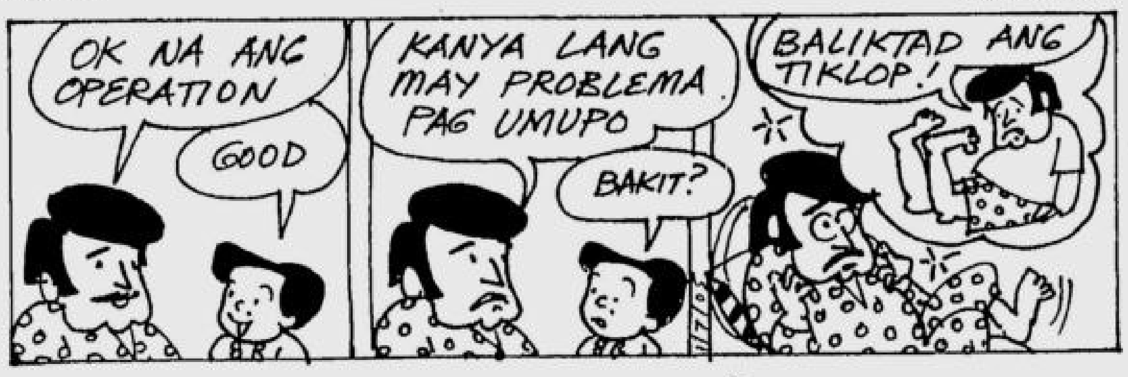
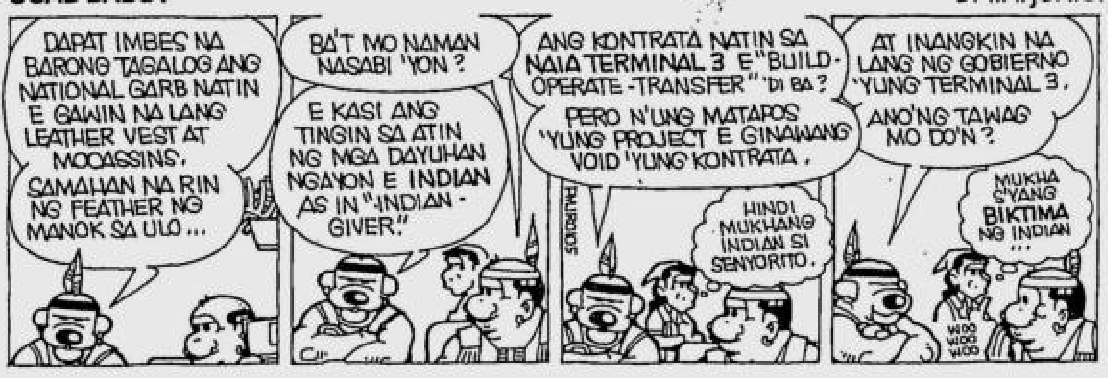
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


OK NA ANG OPERATION
GOOD
KANYA LANG MAY PROBLEMA PAG UMUPO
BAKIT?
BALIKTAD ANG TIKLOP!

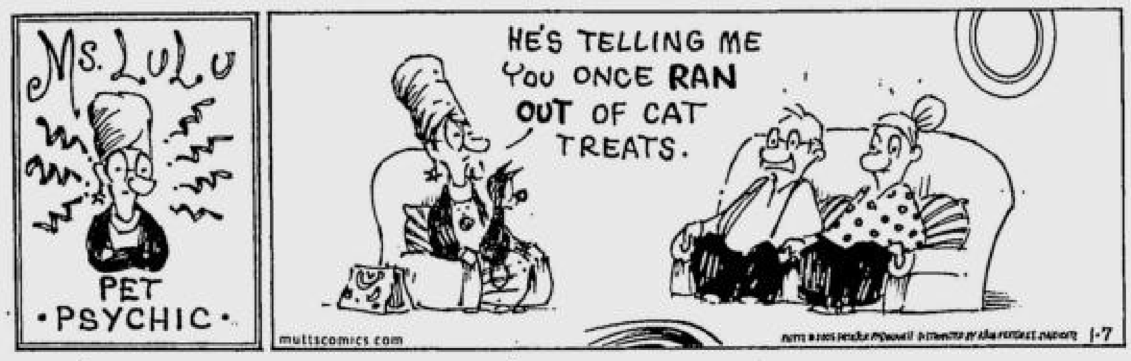
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


DAPAT IMBES NA BARONG TAGALOG ANG NATIONAL GARB NATIN E GAWIN NA LANG LEATHER VEST AT MOCASSINS.
SAMAHAN NA RIN NG FEATHER NG MANOK SA ULO...
BA'T MO NAMAN NASABI 'YON?
E KASI ANG TINGIN SA ATIN NG MGA DAYUHAN NGAYON E INDIAN AS IN "INDIAN-GIVER."
ANG KONTRATA NATIN SA NAIA TERMINAL 3 E "BUILD-OPERATE-TRANSFER" 'DI BA?
PERO N'UNG MATAPOS 'YUNG PROJECT E GINAWANG VOID 'YUNG KONTRATA.
HINDI MUKHANG INDIAN SI SENYORITO.
AT INANGKIN NA LANG NG GOBIERNO 'YUNG TERMINAL 3.
ANO'NG TAWAG MO DO'N?
MUKHA S'YANG BIKTIMA NG INDIAN...
WOO WOO WOO

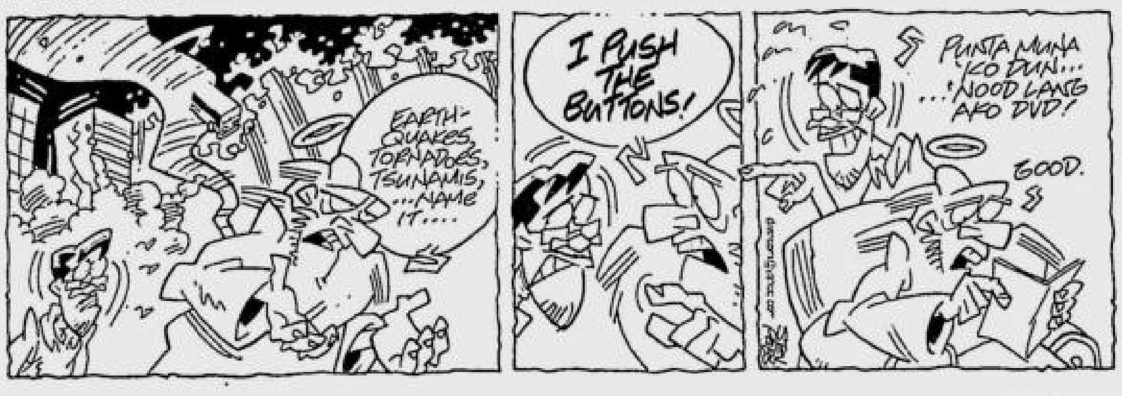
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


Ms. LuLu
PET •PSYCHIC•
HE'S TELLING ME YOU ONCE RAN OUT OF CAT TREATS.
muttscomics.com
1-7

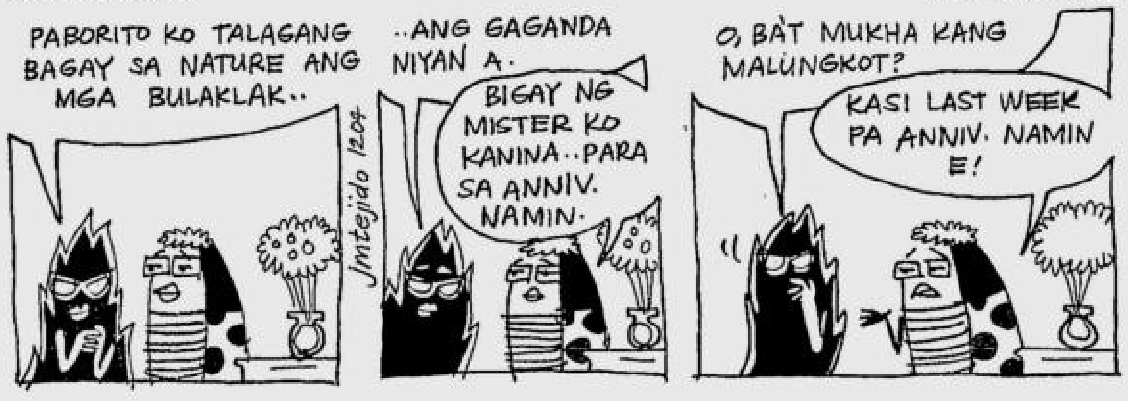
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


EARTHQUAKES, TORNADOES, TSUNAMIS, ...NAME IT....
I PUSH THE BUTTONS!
PUNTA MUNA 'KO DUN... ...NOOD LANG AKO DVD!
GOOD.

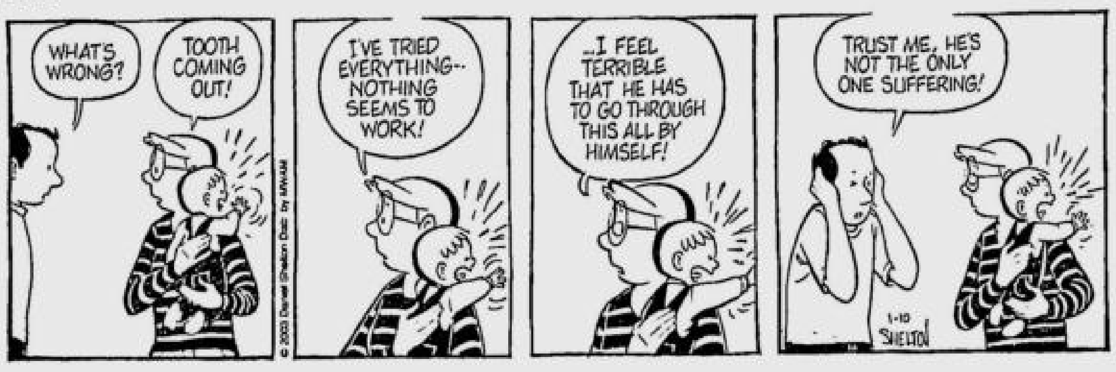
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PABORITO KO TALAGANG BAGAY SA NATURE ANG MGA BULAKLAK..
..ANG GAGANDA NIYAN A.
BIGAY NG MISTER KO KANINA..PARA SA ANNIV. NAMIN.
jmtejido 12.04
O, BA'T MUKHA KANG MALUNGKOT?
KASI LAST WEEK PA ANNIV. NAMIN E!

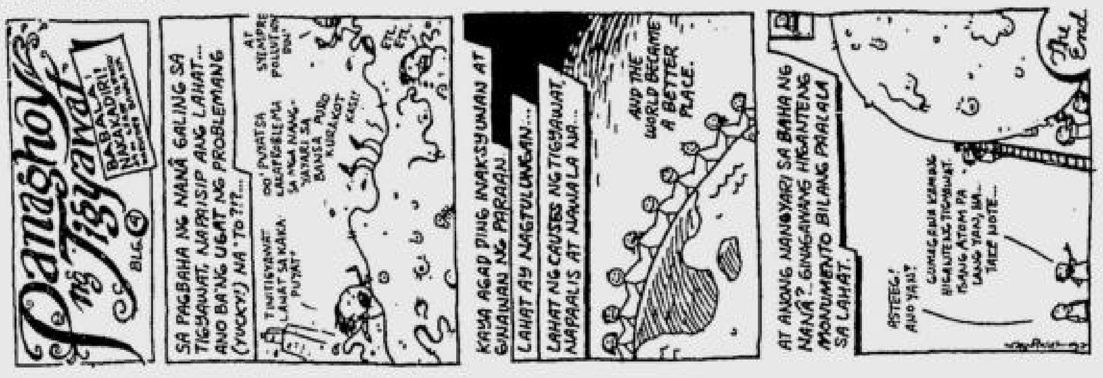
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


WHAT'S WRONG?
TOOTH COMING OUT!
I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING-- NOTHING SEEMS TO WORK!
...I FEEL TERRIBLE THAT HE HAS TO GO THROUGH THIS ALL BY HIMSELF!
TRUST ME, HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE SUFFERING!
1-10
SHELTON

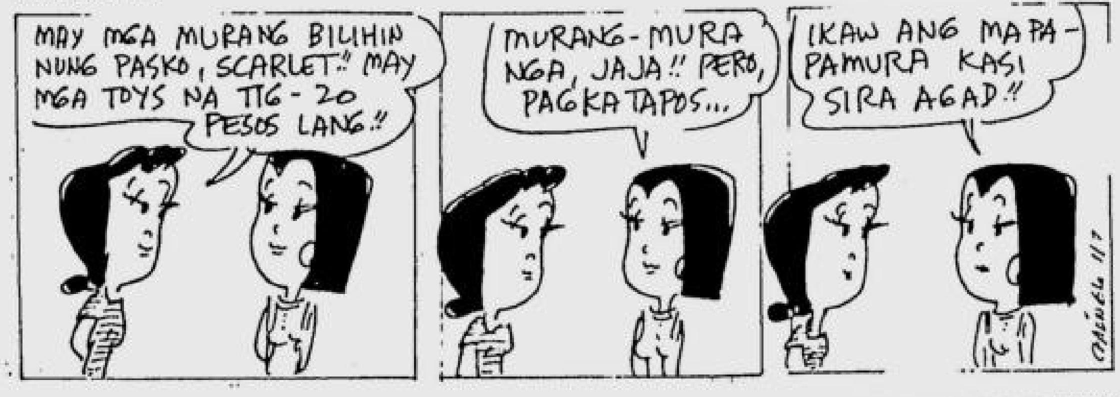
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


Panaghoy ng Tigyawat
SA PAGBAHA NG NANÂ GALING SA TIGYAWAT, NAPAISIP ANG LAHAT... ANO BA'NG UGAT NG PROBLEMANG (YUCKY!) NA 'TO?!?...
KAYA AGAD DING INAKSYUNAN AT GINAWAN NG PARAAN.
LAHAT AY NAGTULUNGAN...
LAHAT NG CAUSES NG TIGYAWAT, NAPAALIS AT NAWALA NA...
AND THE WORLD BECAME A BETTER PLACE.
AT ANONG NANGYARI SA BAHA NG NANÂ? GINAWANG HIGANTENG MONUMENTO BILANG PAALALA SA LAHAT.
The End

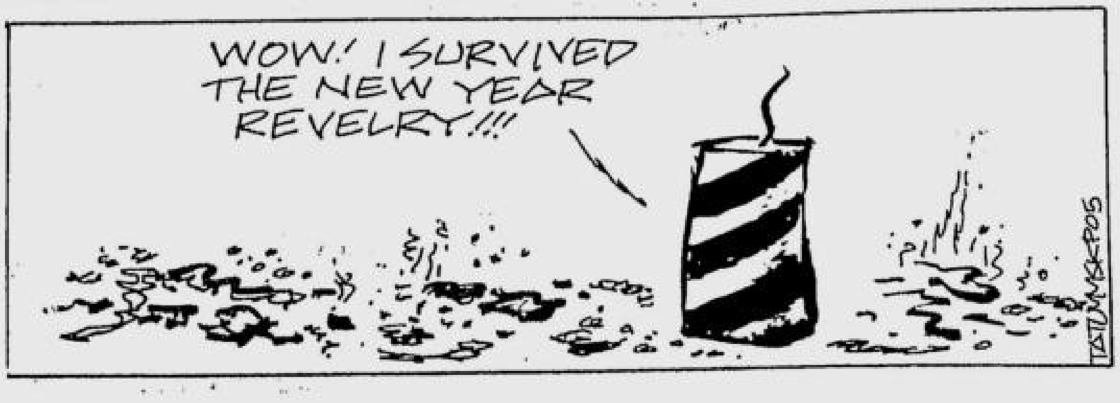
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


MAY MGA MURANG BILIHIN NUNG PASKO, SCARLET!! MAY MGA TOYS NA TIG-20 PESOS LANG!!
MURANG-MURA NGA, JAJA!! PERO, PAGKATAPOS...
IKAW ANG MAPAPAMURA KASI SIRA AGAD!!
CHIONGLO 1/7

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


WOW! I SURVIVED THE NEW YEAR REVELRY!!!
TATUM&PAPU05

VACO and Peter van Driel, Mathilda van Weerden and Air France KLM's Dindin Monserrate

SYLVAIN Andrieu, Greg Le Henand and Gyillaume Desnoes

FRENCH CONNECTION. Alliance Française's Philippe Normand, Antonella Culasso and Vincent Butaye

Airline merger brings Manila and Europe closer

SGV's David Balangue

BUSINESS magnate Antonio Rufino

WE LOVE FLYING. Frederick Nicolon and Mary Ann Seesante

PRESIDENT of ADD Group Jacques Dupasquier with Richard Radier

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** on **Kodak Max**

THE *TRÈS* chic Air France and the ever reliable KLM Royal Dutch Airlines formally announced their merger with the launch of non-stop flights between Manille and exciting Europe.

The new flight was launched in a fantastic fun bash held at the Rizal Ballroom of the grand Makati Shangri-La Hotel. The launch was led by hotshot officials of both airlines.

The merger means KLM would conduct non-stop flights via the state-of-the-art Boeing 777 from Manila to picturesque Amsterdam.

During the launch, colorful native dances were presented by the Bayanihan Dance Troupe. Fabulous songs were rendered by that lady with a voice that could give you goosebumps, gorgeous **Menchu Lauchengco-Yulo**, and the Akafellas. Their performances knocked our socks off, *palanggas*.

Mingling while sipping wine and munching yummy finger-foods were hot name-droppables in business, travel and tourism. Leading the pack were popular Dutch Ambassador **Robert A. Vornis** and *très* adorable French Ambassador, Madame **Renée Veyret**; Swedish Ambassador **Annika Markovic**; Labor Secretary **Patricia Sto. Tomas**; the former tourism secretary, tall and beautiful **Gemma Cruz-Araneta**; Tourism Undersecretary **Oscar Palabyab**; and Press Undersecretary Robert Mananquil.

Regional officials of Air France-KLM arrived in full airline force. Among them were **Boet Kreiken**, KLM area manager for the Asia Pacific; **Ihab Sorial**, KLM general manager-Southeast Asia II; **Frank van't Hof**, KLM marketing manager-Southeast Asia II; *très charmant* **Louis Vergeon**, Air France general manager-Philippines and Guam; brilliant Jose "Joey" Laurente Jr., Air France-KLM country manager-Philippines; and cyber smart **Gabriel Braganza**, Air France-KLM sales manager, *palanggas*.

Ten super-lucky invitees each went home with a round-trip World Business Class ticket to their favorite Europe destination. Now, that's an airline's party to end all parties! Cool!

Golf bash

Whenever I am in Boracay, that gorgeous island under the sun, I get recharged to the max. But when I jetted there a couple of sleeps ago, I had a particularly golden weekend, *palanggas*, all because of the indefatigable and dashing *palangga* of everyone, gentleman of all seasons, **Noel "Toti" Cariño**, chair of Fairways & Bluewater Golf and Country Club, who celebrated another thrilling year of his life with the famous Chairman's Golden Cup.

AIR France KLM country manager Jose "Joey" Laurente Jr., Air France EVP and managing director-Asia Pacific Jean-Louis Pinson, KLM GM-Southeast Asia II Ihab Sorial, KLM area manager-Asia Pacific Boet Kreiken, tall beauty Gemma Cruz-Araneta and Air France GM-Philippines/Guam Louis Vergeon

SAY SMILE! Air France-KLM account manager Malyn Sarino, Kuala Lumpur sales manager Ester Ng, SEA II controller Michiel van Doorn and Bangkok sales manager Thanawat Dennapasurapong

CORDYON Tours and Travel president and managing director Celine Clemente, AF-KLM account manager Joanna Tan and Hotel InterContinental's Carmela Bocanegra

CHILLING IT OUT. Edwin Ermita and Lito Trinidad

BERT Lina and Freddie Jalasco

AIR France EVP and Asia-Pacific managing director Jean-Louis Pinson with KLM airport station manager Joan Doromal

FAIRWAYS' young hotshot Geb Bilbao with Anthony Tan and Peewee del Rosario

The evening before the day of the tournament, invitees arrived in their cool Hawaiian outfits. They were welcomed with cocktails at the breezy Boracay Terraces beach front with all the booze flowing, the crowd danced up a storm, after which Toti gives his welcome talk to all the tournament participants. But getting things really rolling was talented, **Marissa Sanchez** who left us all in stitches, *palanggas*.

Early next morning, before you could bat an eyelash, all the golfing enthusiasts turned up to compete on the picturesque course, which has been aptly described as "the Golfing Jewel of the Pacific."

As the day winded down after sunset, the guests trooped to the Fairways & Bluewater poolside area, which had been decked beautifully for the awarding ceremonies and birthday bash by multitalented gourmand and interior designer **Cecille Ysmael**.

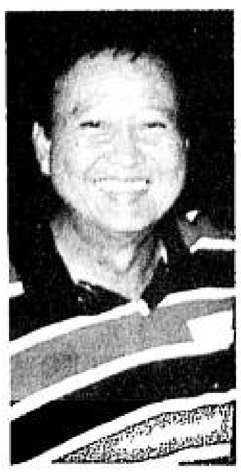
Entertainment was non-stop. It was provided by the hot band, Hyperbeat. The witty emcee was **Johnny Litton**. Having a ball were Boracay popular Mayor **Ciceron Cawaling**; Rep. **Ricky Sandoval**; **Greg Barnes**; McDonald's **George Yang**; **Lino Barte**, plus many other golf personalities, *palanggas*.

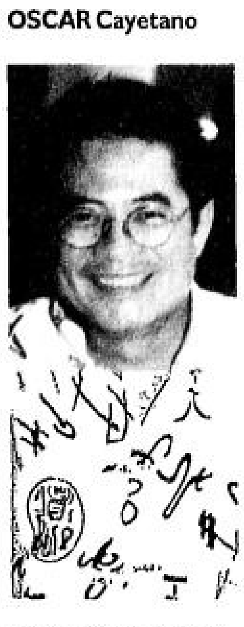
Correction

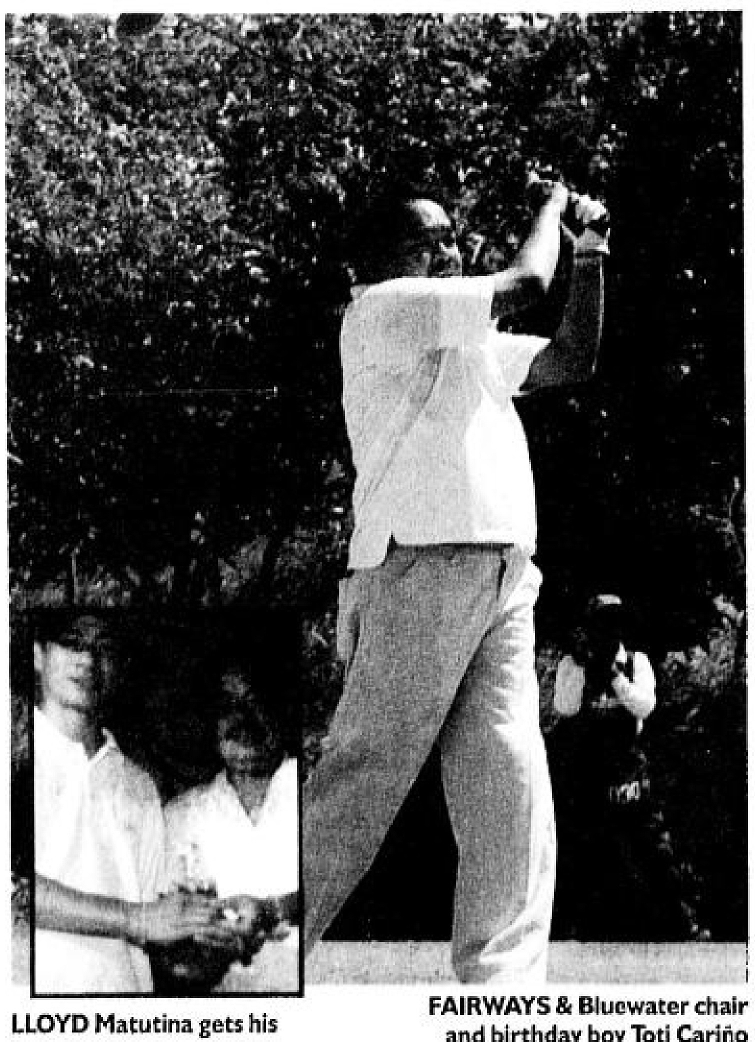
In my article last Dec. 31, I reported on the super birthday bash of popular **Joe Reyes**. The Reyeses have been close *famille* friend of my family down three generations. Unfortunately, I reported that Joe's wife, the beautiful **Meldy Albano R.** was missed at the affair. I had thought she had left this world and joined the Lord, since I knew that she was very ill five years ago, and nothing was said or mentioned about her.

I deeply apologize for the error. Thank goodness, she is still with us.

So sorry, *palanggas*.


OSCAR Cayetano


VIRTUOSO violinist John Lesaca


LLOYD Matutina gets his well-deserved trophy from Toti C.

FAIRWAYS & Bluewater chair and birthday boy Toti Cariño doing the ceremonial tee-off

IT'S PARTY TIME! Greg Barnes, Fairways & Bluewater chair Toti Cariño, Charles and Tracy Balas, Bruno Robles and Tammy Robles

HERITAGE Park's Jack Kidwiler, top emcee Johnny Litton, Emir Tubayan and Raquel Mendoza

Happy new hair

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

ONE of my New Year's resolutions is to take better care of my hair. Just last December, I realized the last time I had a haircut was June 2004, so I made sure I would have it cut a week before Christmas at the latest.

Other hairdressers were eager to help me chop my hair. Apparently, a short haircut that still makes a girl look feminine is some sort of trophy for stylists, because it is harder to make a flattering short cut than to keep hair long.

But there was no way I would cut my hair short ever again, because maintenance was time consuming and styling was very limited. Besides, I looked so much like my dad it was freaky.

Beauty columnists and editors ask each other advice, so I did, too. I asked around for names of stylists who could give me a new look but would keep my hair long.

There was an overwhelming vote for Louis Philippe Kee, a Hong Kong-based stylist who comes here every now and then and works at Emphasis in Rockwell when he is in town.

My requirements: I wanted my thin, fine, limp and flyaway hair to stay long, look different but be flattering and versatile. I wanted it to have the illusion of sex symbol volume but one that was easy to maintain.

Louis had no problem whatsoever with my conditions, and started snipping away. The man was a genius! As he progressed, my high cheekbones emerged, my eyes seemed to open up and, best of all, my square jaw was tamed so my face now looked more oval.

Different in a good way

Afterward, when I met up with some of my friends at the mall, they asked if I had lost weight. Wow! Others even asked if I had any cosmetic surgery done on my eyes and nose, because I looked like I had dropped 5-10 pounds.

My face was different in a good way. The closest resemblance I could think of was a shorter version of Tia Carerre's hair in "Relic Hunter."

These days, fixing it is a breeze, and just by parting my hair differently, I get a totally different look. Louis was able to work with my flyaway hair and its natural wave to give me the volume I wanted.

I was offered free highlights but I was adamantly against them, because a lot of times highlights can distract from a bad haircut and make it look better than it actually is—until you try to fix your hair yourself.

Besides, with the way the economy is going, I wanted to encourage saving on expensive hair coloring. I colored my hair myself and used Garnier's Natea Medium Golden Brown (on sale at P219) on my whole head days before my haircut. Well, almost a month has passed and I am still so happy with it.

Here are suggested shampoos to use (get the matching conditioner too):

For volume: Sebastian Shaper Volume Boost Shampoo, Kérastase Volum Actif shampoo

For sleek straight hair: Tigi Bedhead in Control Freak, L'Oreal Professionel Liss extreme, Phytolisse shampoo by Phyto

For dry damaged hair: The Body Shop Honey shampoo, Kérastase Oleo Relax, Phytospecific

For colored Hair: Phytocitrus, L'Oreal Professinel power color

For falling or easy-to-break hair: Pantene Hair Fall Control

For oily hair: The Body Shop Nettle oil balance shampoo and Phytocedrat

Product breakthrough

Godiva Skin Care, the pioneer in using licorice for whitening, now offers a lip gloss that lightens dark lips (and nipples!) and gives them a pinkish to reddish tinge.

Fixing my 'do is a breeze these days, and just by parting it differently, I get a totally different look

Emphasis Salon is at Rockwell Makati (tel. 8980818). Phyto products are available at Essenses Rustans except Phytospecific, available at Basement Salon (8982222). Kérastase, Tigi Bedheads and Sebastian are available at Piandre and Emphasis salons.

E-mail the author at kinnysalas @yahoo.com

SOME of my favorite shampoos

BUDGET buys: Godiva lightening lip gloss and Garnier hair dye

Truly skin-deep

From page D1

gic to hydroquinone, you won't experience any allergic reactions [to Obagi-C] either," says Dr. Obagi.

A typical Obagi-C system, which can last for up to three months, comes with cleansing gel, clarifying serum, exfoliating lotion and sun block for day. The same cleansing gel is used at night before clarifying serum and night cream with Vitamins C and E are applied.

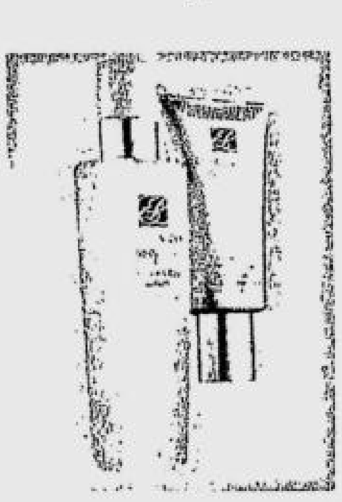
Most beauty products, which rely heavily on advertising, says Dr. Obagi, stay on the skin's surface. If they can't penetrate the skin, they don't do anything substantial to activate the cells and repair the damage from within."

"No cosmetic brand can claim to do what Obagi-C does," he adds, "as the FDA mandates all over-the-counter products to do no harm to the skin, making them virtually ineffective. They're for moisturizing and gentle cleansing at best."

And the best part is Obagi-C promises its user Photolumines skin. That alone is reason enough for many skin-whitening obsessed Filipino women to get a prescription.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph.

Beauty products to keep skin healthy



For youthful and glowing skin

Estée Lauder presents Re-Nutriv Intensive Lifting Lotion designed to strengthen skin so it remains youthful and glowing. The lotion keeps skin hydrated by locking in water in the cells using linoleic acid. Cantella Asiatica and powerful anti-oxidants boost collagen products. Nanosphere technology allows easy absorption of this formula. Estée Lauder is available at Rustans.

What every woman needs

Dior pioneers a new approach to help keep the skin firm. With the Capture Sculpt 10, Dior addresses all women's concerns, whatever the shape of their faces. The Firming Pre-Treatment Lotion prepares skin for the treatments to follow. Contouring Gel-Emulsion is for round faces that tend to become too fleshy, primarily around the chin and throat. This refining complex helps contour the lower part of the face. Re-Plumping Emulsion is for triangular faces with prominent cheekbones. This extra-volume complex helps plump up hollowed cheeks and thinned lips. Lifting Firming Creme or Fluid has a special effect on overall skin tone. Skin feels denser, better supported, and the face appears "lifted."

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See posters and flyers for details.

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Sunshine in her scratchy skirt

Or why photographers ducked whenever she whizzed by, and other scenes at the Metro Manila Filmfest fashion carnival

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Jim Guiao Punzalan and Rudy Esperas

SUNSHINE Cruz started the evening on a high note before swiftly morphing into a walking spectacle that caught everyone's attention for, uh, the wrong reasons.

As one of the evening's featured performers at the recent Metro Manila Film Festival awards night, the former bombshell looked dazzling in a modernized ethnic column by fashion designer Eric Pineda that veered from the usual clichés dished out by not a few clueless designers.

To Pineda's credit, Sunshine's fair skin and *mestiza* features didn't get in the way of the two-piece number, a yin and yang of sorts that deftly combined beadwork and draping, structured and fluid lines. In lieu of brown and other earth colors, Pineda wisely opted for a more modern shade of deep periwinkle that his muse pulled off with characteristic aplomb.

Alas, like a number of stars in the past, Sunshine proved too weak to resist the urge to change into a second totally different number: a 1950s-inspired cocktail dress with an extremely huge and stiff multi-layered tulle skirt that looked too costume-y. Not even impeccable accessorizing with well-placed brooches could disguise the encumbrance.

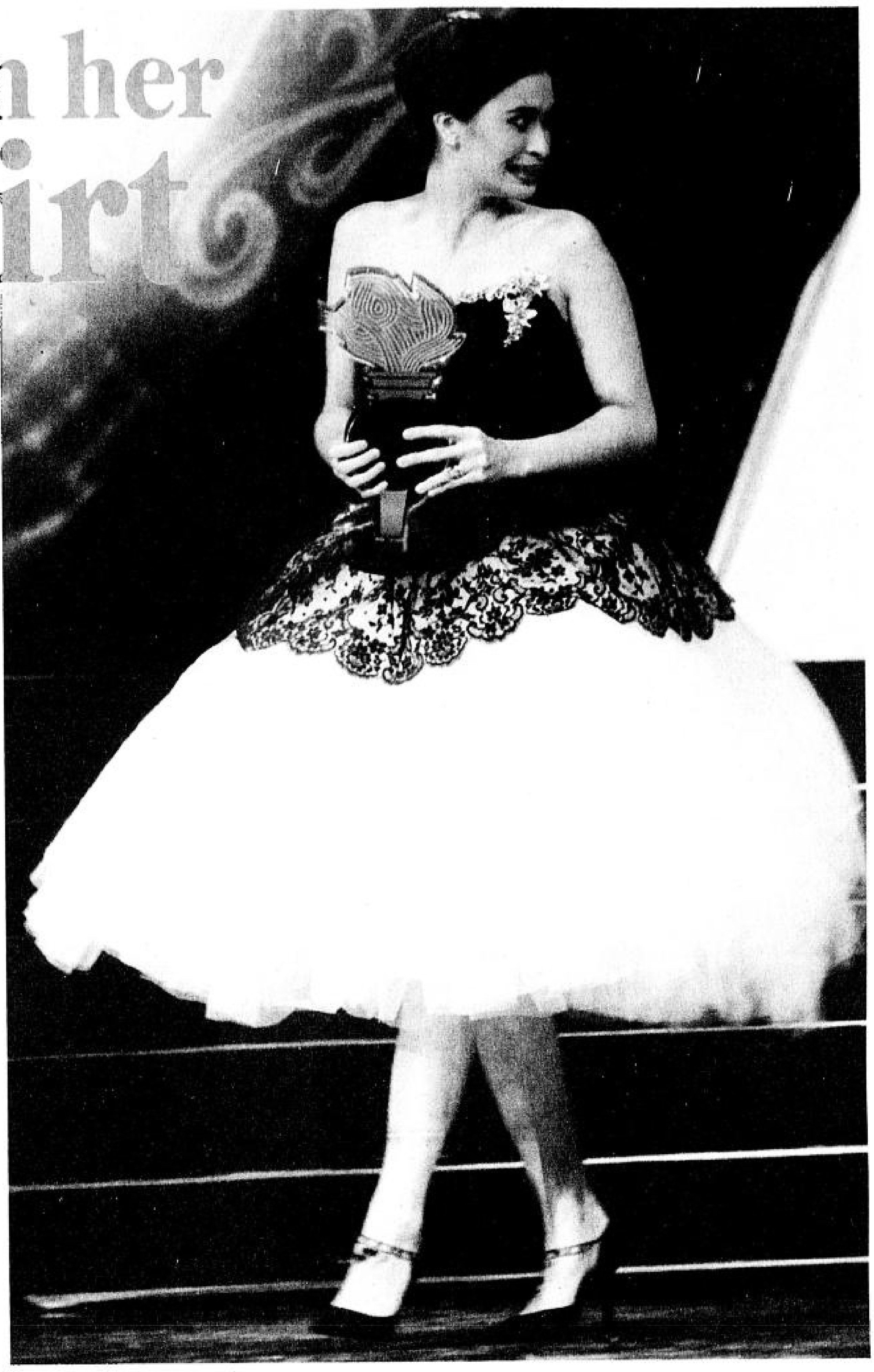
In fact, several imaginative souls were reminded of the tutu-inspired anomalies worn by Bjork and Lara Flynn Boyle some years back. Photographers seated on the center aisle apparently didn't have the time or courage to conjure up other memories as they ducked or looked the other way whenever Sunshine whizzed by in her scratchy skirt. Ouch!

We'd like to believe the inspiration behind such audacious attention-grabbing was "Sex and the City's" Sarah Jessica Parker. There is no other acceptable excuse.

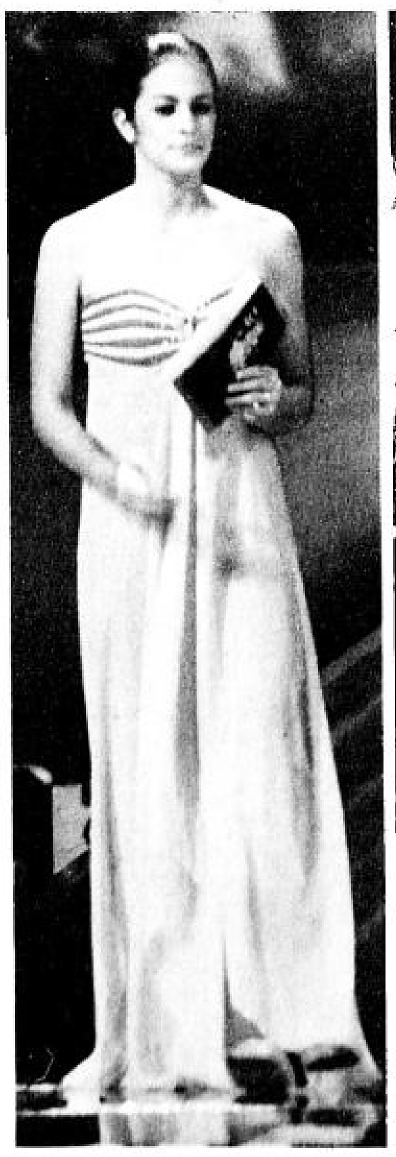
Although Sunshine has managed to remain slim in spite of motherhood, she's simply too tall to pull off a Carrie Bradshaw or, for that matter, impersonate a ballerina. Besides, the designer could have used a little—okay a

THE METRO/4

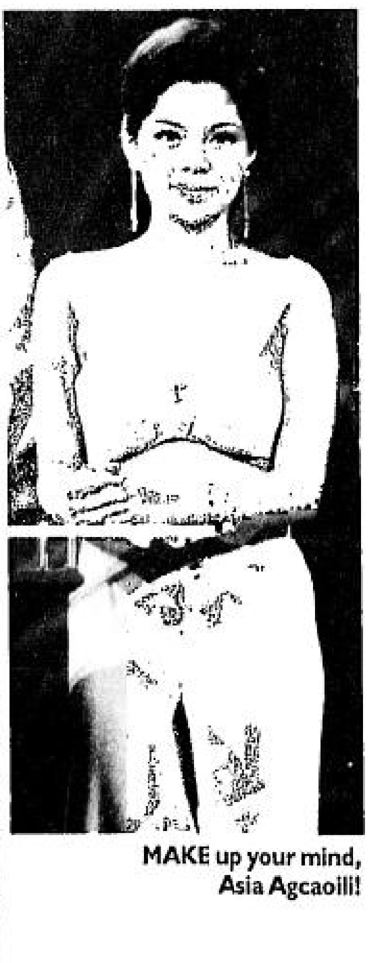
THE FIRST gown, an updated ethnic column



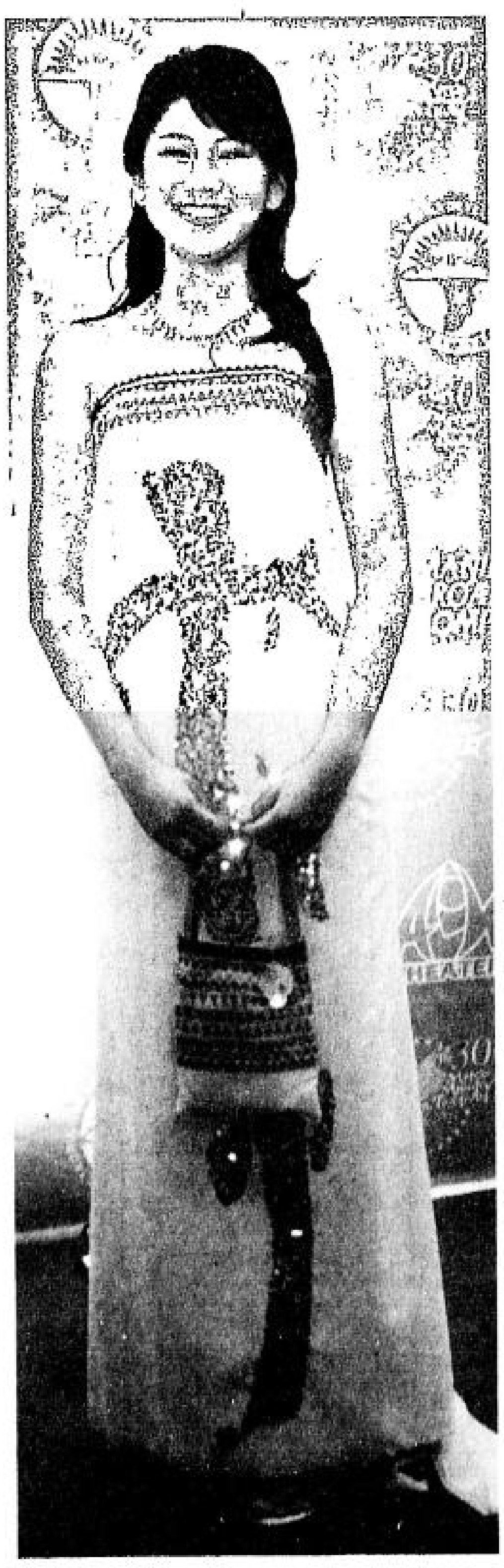
TOO BIG and too stiff for words



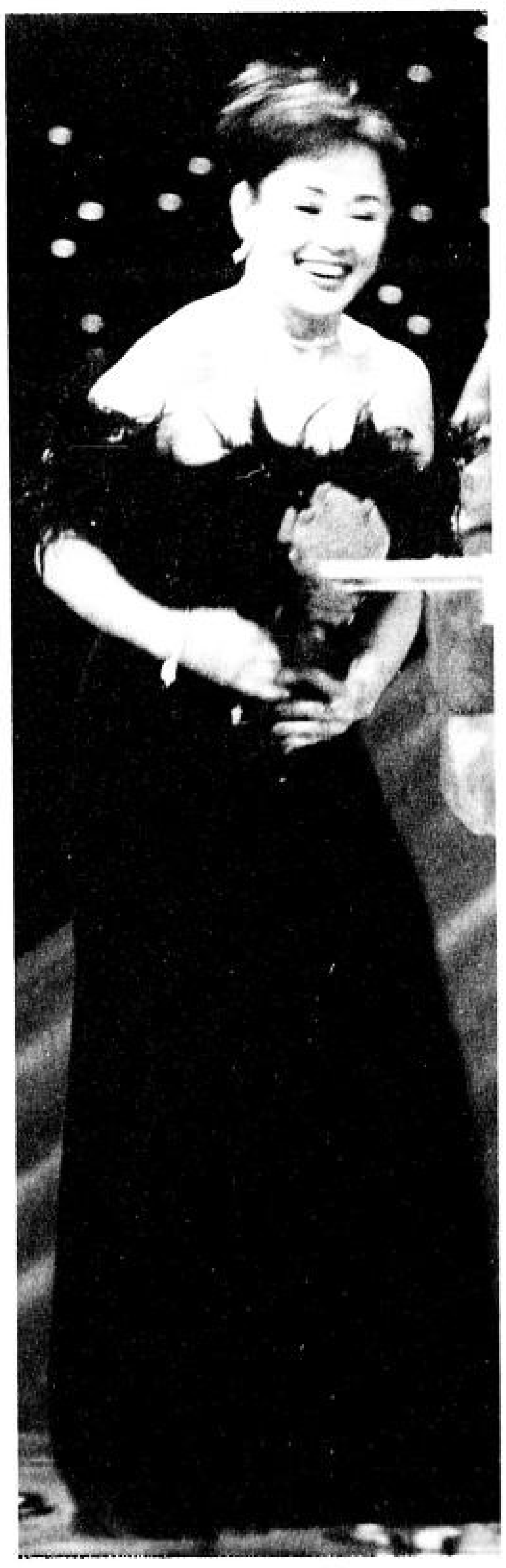
LEILA Kuzma's chest plates fit for Wonder Woman



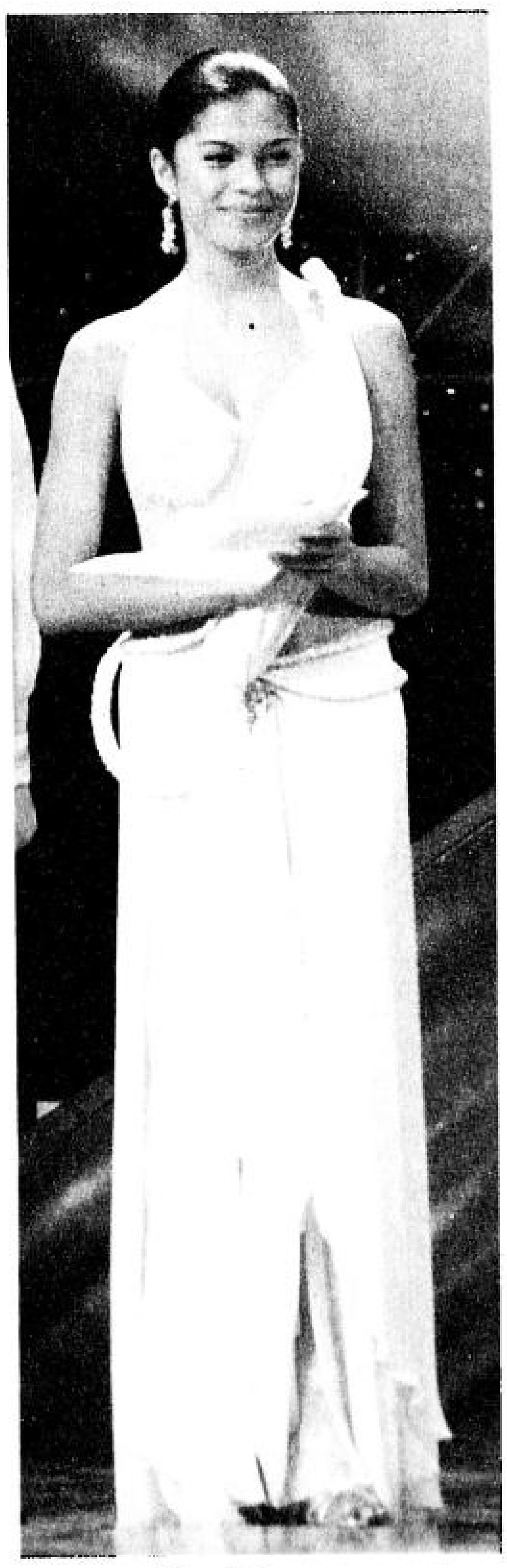
MAKE up your mind, Asia Agcaoili!



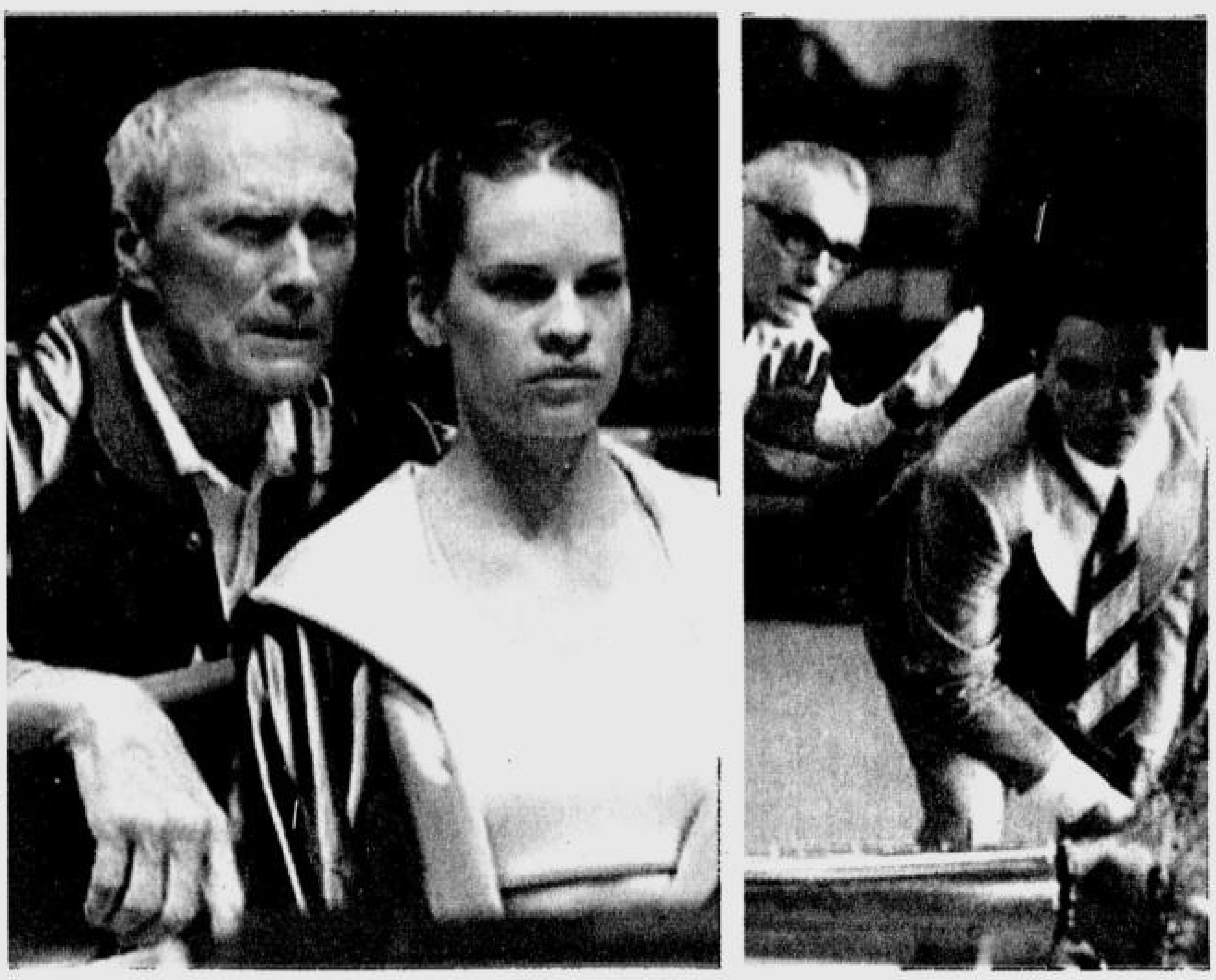
SARAH Geronimo stays young but far from boring.



VILMA Santos wisely dresses her age in Danilo Franco's off-shoulder creation.



BUSY body Juliana Palermo



EASTWOOD and Swank for "Million Dollar Baby," Scorsese and Leonardo DiCaprio for "The Aviator"

Eastwood, Swank and Scorsese lead critics' picks in North Texas

NEW YORK—"Million Dollar Baby" has won another round, this time taking top honors from the Dallas-Fort Worth Film Critics Association.

The film—directed by Clint Eastwood, who stars as a veteran boxing manager—also earned best-actress honors Monday for Hilary Swank's performance as a fighter who comes from nothing and turns into a champion.

Two out of three New York Times critics named "Million Dollar Baby" the best film of 2004, and the movie has shown up on the top-10 lists of several other critics' groups. It also has received five Golden Globe nominations, including best motion picture drama.

The 63 print and broadcast journalists from across North Texas who make up the group named Paul Giamatti best actor for the wine-tasting comedy "Sideways." Two of his co-stars, Thomas Haden Church and Virginia Madsen, took the supporting-actor categories.

Martin Scorsese was named best director for his Howard Hughes epic, "The Aviator."

"The Incredibles" was the group's pick for best animated feature. Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" won the documentary honors, and the French film "A Very Long Engagement" took the foreign-language category.

After "Million Dollar Baby," the Dallas-Fort Worth Film Critics Association's picks for the year's best films were, in order: "Sideways," "Finding Neverland," "The Aviator," "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," "Ray," "Kinsey," "The Incredibles," "A Very Long Engagement" and "Hotel Rwanda." *AP*

Wanted: Moonrise film fest entries

THERE are stories out there, but are there people who want them?

The Philippines has among the most beautiful landscapes on earth. Before all that beauty fades or disappears forever—let movies capture and tell the story.

Through the first ever Moonrise Film Festival, the Center for Environmental Awareness and Education (CEAE) invites all documentary filmmakers to tell their own tales.

The festival will be held in August. Those who want to join the competition are vying for the Charlie Award—the festival's version of the Oscars—cash and other prizes.

All documentaries focusing on the country's environment and culture made from 1999 onward may be submitted for consideration. Entries should not have won in any previous competition. They can be in VHS, VCD, or DVD format, with a running time of 45 minutes or less.

Submit all entries to: The Submissions Curator, The Center for Environmental Awareness Education, Unit 3A Gilmore Heights, No. 18 Granada corner Castilla streets, Barangay Valencia, Quezon City, 1100. Deadline is June 15, 5 p.m.

For inquiries, call Froi at 7217360, or check the website www.moonrisefilmfest.org.

SM CINEMA movietime

moviepickoftheWeek

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BRAD PITT
MATT DAMON
CATHERINE ZETA-JONES
ANDY GARCIA
DON CHEADLE
BERNIE MAC
and JULIA ROBERTS

TWELVE IS THE NEW ELEVEN.
OCEAN'S TWELVE

NOW SHOWING

OPENS THIS WEEK

BLADE TRINITY
MTRCB RATING: R13

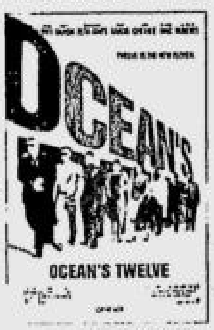
For years, Blade has fought against the vampires in the cover of night, with the world above unaware of the brutal ongoing war. But now, after falling into the crosshairs of the FBI, he is forced out into the daylight where he is driven to join forces with a clan of human vampire hunters he never knew existed - The Nightstalkers. Together with Abigail (Jessica Biel) and Hannibal (Ryan Reynolds), two deftly trained Nightstalkers, Blade follows a trail of blood to an ancient creature that is hunting him .. the original vampire, Dracula.

Now Showing at:
SM Megamall • Fairview • North Edsa • Manila • Sta. Mesa • Southmall Tutuban • Bicutan • Sucat

KUNG FU HUSTLE
MTRCB RATING: PG13

A hapless wanna be gangster, Sing, must overcome his inability to wield a knife and demonstrate his mettle in order to become a member of the notorious Axe Gang. After several encounters with thugs and a fearsome adversary known as the Beast, Sing overcomes his inadequacy and realizes he is the greatest kung fu master of them all, destined to protect the sacred street.

Now Showing at:
SM Megamall • Fairview North Edsa Manila • Sta. Mesa Southmall • Tutuban • Bicutan Sucat



OCEAN'S TWELVE
MTRCB RATING: PG13

Daniel Ocean recruits one more team member so he can pull off three major European heists in this sequel to Ocean's 11. It's three years later and Terry Benedict wants his money back. While Ocean and his team are spread out all over the U.S., Benedict tracks down every single one of them. Now, Ocean's Eleven is back together and they need to pay Benedict back PLUS interest within two weeks. The team travels to Amsterdam to start a new heist.

Now Showing at:
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1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 OCEAN'S TWELVE

METRO MANILA

sm megamall
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 SIGAW
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 ENTENG KABISOTE
6 AISHITE IMASU 1941
7 KUNG FU HUSTLE
8 MANO PO 3
9 LASTIKMAN
10 OCEAN'S TWELVE
11 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
12 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

sm city fairview
1 MANO PO 3
2 SIGAW
3 AISHITE IMASU 1941
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 ENTENG KABISOTE
6 OCEAN'S TWELVE
7 BLADE TRINITY
8 KUNG FU HUSTLE
9 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
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12 LASTIKMAN

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2 OCEAN'S TWELVE
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
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5 OCEAN'S TWELVE
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8 SIGAW
9 ENTENG KABISOTE
10 SO HAPPY TOGETHER

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3 BLADE TRINITY
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE
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7 ENTENG KABISOTE
8 OCEAN'S TWELVE
9 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
10 MANO PO 3

sm city north edsa
1 SIGAW
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 MANO PO 3
6 OCEAN'S TWELVE
7 BLADE TRINITY
8 KUNG FU HUSTLE

sm cinema tutuban
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE

sm supercenter sucat
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 BLADE TRINITY
4 SO HAPPY TOGETHER

sm city bicutan
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE

Movies are subject to change without prior notice • For complete movie schedule, visit [illegible]

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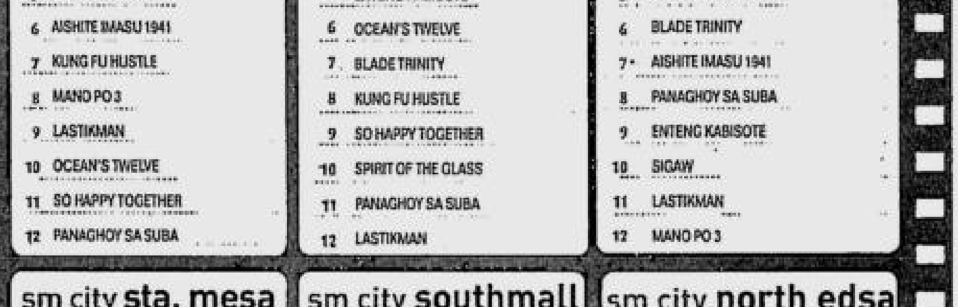

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MOVIE GUIDE
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PREMIERE THEATRE
(DOLBY) MANO PO 3 GP

1 (DOLBY) OCEAN'S TWELVE PG13
2 (DOLBY) KUNG FU HUSTLE PG13
3 (DOLBY) BLADE TRINITY R13
4 (DOLBY) SO HAPPY TOGETHER PG13

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isetann
CINERAMA COMPLEX RECTO tel 733.4236
1. (DOLBY) BAD SIGAW
2. AISHITE IMASU 1941
3. HAPPY TOGETHER
4. SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5. ENTENG KABISOTE

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781
1 RESERVE
2 RESERVE
3 RESERVE
4 (SDDS) RESERVE
5 RESERVE
6 (DOLBY) RESERVE
7 (DTS) RESERVE
8 RESERVE
9 RESERVE

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 MANO PO - 3
2 ENTENG KABISOTE

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) MANO PO - 3
2 HAPPY TOGETHER
3 AISHITE IMASU 1941
4 (DTS) SIGAW

Filinvest
FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (DDS) MANO PO
2 (SDDS) ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DTS) SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 GOLD (DTS) PANAGHOY SA SUBA
5 GOLD (DOLBY) AISHITE IMASU 1941
6 GOLD (SDDS) SIGAW
7 GOLD (DOLBY) LASTIKMAN
8 [illegible] LASTIKMAN
9 [illegible] HAPPY TOGETHER
10 [illegible] LASTIKMAN

Masagana CINEMA
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1 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
2 HAPPY TOGETHER
3 LASTIKMAN

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1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 LASTIKMAN
4 AISHITE IMASU 1941

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Las Pinas) tel (047) 237.7007
1 (DOLBY) SIGAW
2 AISHITE IMASU 1941

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) BLADE III
2 (DOLBY) OCEAN'S TWELVE
3 (DOLBY) KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 (DOLBY) HAPPY TOGETHER

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT
Araneta Center
ALIMALL CINEPLEX
Tel. 911-3101 loc. 8242 / 8281 / 8397
1 (Dolby) OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 (SDDS) BLADE TRINITY
3 (DTS) KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 (Dolby) SO HAPPY TOGETHER
5 (Dolby) ENTENG KABISOTE

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 LASTIKMAN
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) AISHITE IMASU 1941
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Alabang) tel 850.4285
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
4 HAPPY TOGETHER
5 (DOLBY) LASTIKMAN
6 SIGAW

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

SIENNA MILLER, 23, his co-star in "Alfie" remake, is the lucky, lucky gal. He proposed on Christmas Day.

Not-so-good news for Jude Law diehards: He's engaged

LONDON—British actor Jude Law has become engaged to actress Sienna Miller after proposing to her on Christmas Day, The Sun newspaper reported on Wednesday.

"It's true they are engaged," a spokesperson for the couple told The Sun. "Jude has bought Sienna a big cluster diamond ring.

"He asked Sienna to marry him on Christmas Day. They spent Christmas together in England. They then headed to the Indian Ocean. They have told their families the news and they're thrilled, as are Jude's children."

Law's most recent role was as the irresistible cad in the remake of "Alfie," where he met Miller, 23, during filming.

The 32-year-old Law first gained wide notice with movie audiences and an Oscar nomination playing a spoiled young playboy and the object of Matt Damon's obsession in "The Talented Mr. Ripley."

He earned a second Academy Award nomination for his role as a Confederate deserter in the popular Civil War drama "Cold Mountain."

But his most recent films—"I Heart Huckabees," "Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow" and "Alfie"—have been commercial flops.

Law, who has three young children by his ex-wife, British fashion designer and actress Sadie Frost, will next been seen in Mike Nichols' upcoming romantic drama, "Closer."

Reuters

Araneta Center
LEISURE GUIDE

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CATHERINE ZETA JONES / JULIA ROBERTS

BLADE TRINITY
WESLEY SNIPES

KUNG FU HUSTLE
STEPHEN CHOW

ENTENG KABISOTE
VIC SOTTO / KRISTINE HERMOSA

SO HAPPY TOGETHER
KRIS AQUINO / ERIC QUIZON

MANO PO 3
VILMA SANTOS / CHRISTOPHER DE LEON

ALI MALL CINEMAS

1 Dolby OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 SDDS BLADE TRINITY
3 dts KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 Dolby SO HAPPY TOGETHER
5 Dolby ENTENG KABISOTE

ARANETA COLISEUM

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Jan. 9	
Jan. 12	
Jan. 16	
Jan. 29	Martin Nievera & Patti Austin Concert

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SO HAPPY TOGETHER PG13	OCEAN'S TWELVE PG13 11:40,2:10,4:40,7:10,9:40	BLADE 3: TRINITY R13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:20
KUNG FU HUSTLE PG13 1:25,3:35,5:45,7:55,10:05	SO HAPPY TOGETHER PG13 12:40,3:00,5:20,7:40,10:00	OCEAN'S TWELVE PG13 12:30,3:00,5:30,8:00,10:30

star group of cinemas movie guide
IN DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND

starmall EDSA-SHAW
Tel. No. 726.61.50
3 Kung Fu Hustle
4 Blade 3
5 Oceans 12

METROPOLIS ALABANG star
Tel. No. 850.42.85
1 Happy Together
2 Nagdadalaga
3 Kung Fu Hustle
4 Enteng Kabisote
5 Blade 3
6 Oceans 12

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GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1 BLADE III
10:40, 1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00
R-13

2 OCEAN'S 12
11:55, 2:45, 5:35 8:25, 11:05
PG-13

3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
11:00, 1:25, 3:50 6:15, 8:40, 11:00
PG-13

4 HAPPY TOGETHER
11:20, 1:40, 4:00 6:20, 8:40, 11:00
PG-13

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CINEMA 1
OCEAN'S TWELVE
10:45, 1:30, 4:15, 7:00, 9:50
PG13

CINEMA 2
KUNG FU HUSTLE
10:45, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
PG13

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.
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① OCEAN'S TWELVE
FS 10.40 AM, 1:30PM, 4.20PM 7.10PM, LMF 10:00PM (PG-13)

② KUNG FU HUSTLE
FS 12.20PM, 2:45PM, 5:10PM 7:35PM, LMF 10.00PM (PG-13)

③ BLADE TRINITY
FS 12PM, 2.30PM, 5PM, 7:30PM LMF 10.00PM (R-13)

④ Special MMFF Promo Price P120
SO HAPPY TOGETHER
FS 12.40 PM, 3PM, 5.20PM, 7:40PM,LMF 10PM (PG-13)

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(GP)

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GALLERIA 632-9115/16
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE • THX
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 KUNG FU HUSTLE
6 OCEAN'S TWELVE
7 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
8 MANO PO 3
9 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
10 SIGAW

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
3 BLADE TRINITY
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5 ENTENG KABISOTE
6 RESERVE
7 KUNG FU HUSTLE

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199
1 MANO PO 3
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
3 BLADE TRINITY
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5 OCEAN'S TWELVE
6 SIGAW
7 ENTENG KABISOTE
8 KUNG FU HUSTLE

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 AISHITE IMASU
3 MANO PO 3
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 KUNG FU HUSTLE
6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
7 ENTENG KABISOTE
8 SIGAW

PIONEER 687-5378
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575
1 MANO PO 3
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SIGAW

CAINTA 240-4661
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE

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Panaghoy sa Suba • Sigaw • Spirit of the Glass • So...Happy Together
30th

STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 BLADE TRINITY
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 KUNG FU HUSTLE

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 MANO PO 3
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 MANO PO 3
3 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 KUNG FU HUSTLE

ANGELES (045) 892-2348
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 BLADE TRINITY
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE
5 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
6 SIGAW

STARMILLS [illegible]
1 SIGAW
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
4 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 OCEAN'S TWELVE
6 BLADE TRINITY

BACOLOD [illegible]
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 MANO PO 3
3 BLADE TRINITY
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 AISHITE IMASU
6 ONE MISSED CALL

ILOILO (033) 336-8070
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2 ONE MISSED CALL
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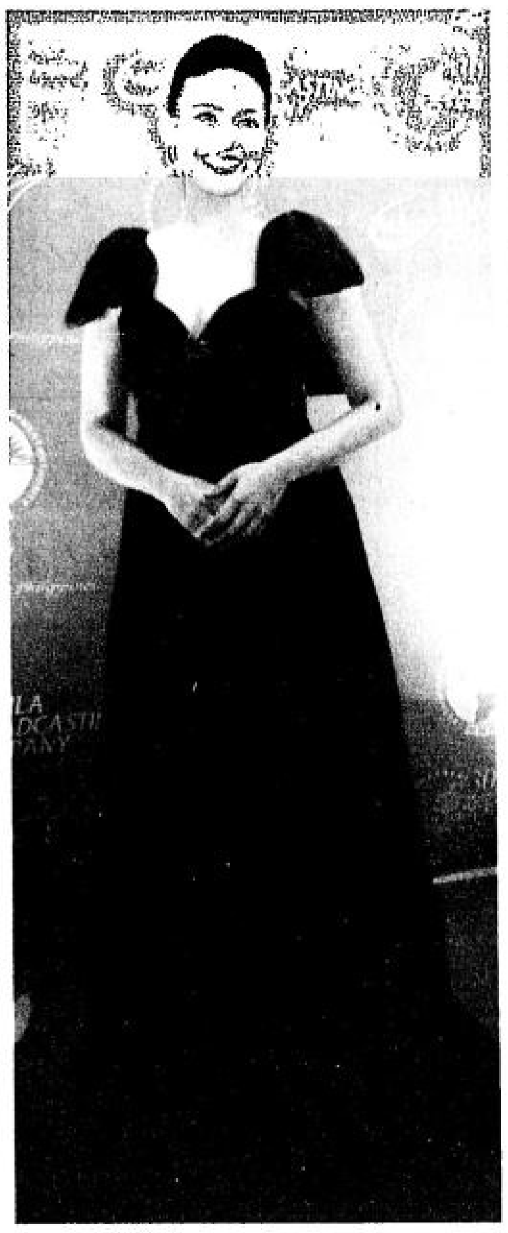
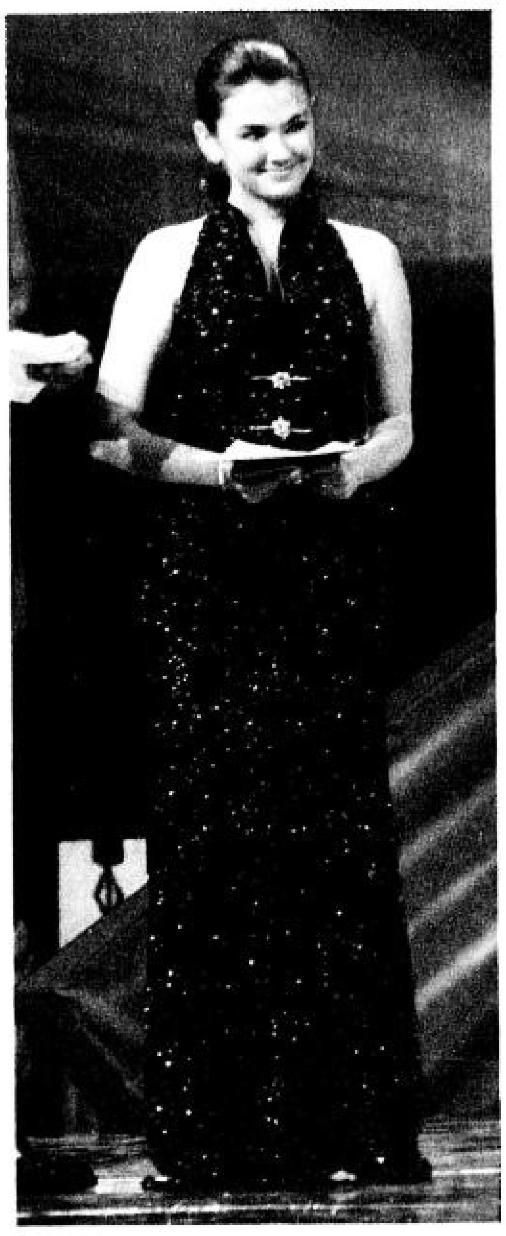
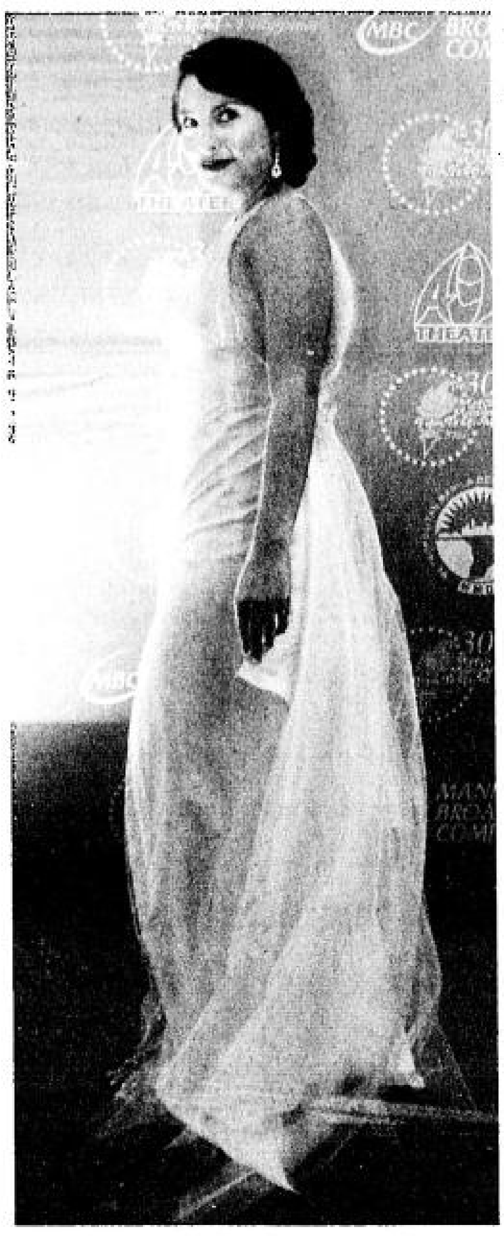


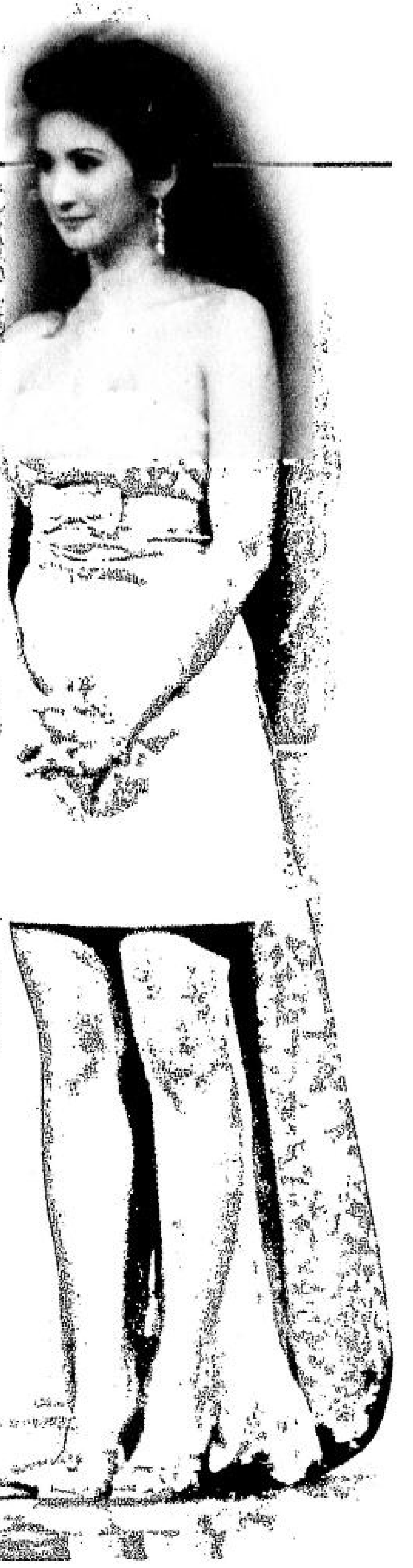
LOVELY Izza Calzado shines in black.



ANGELICA Panganiban of "Mano Po 3" goes literal.

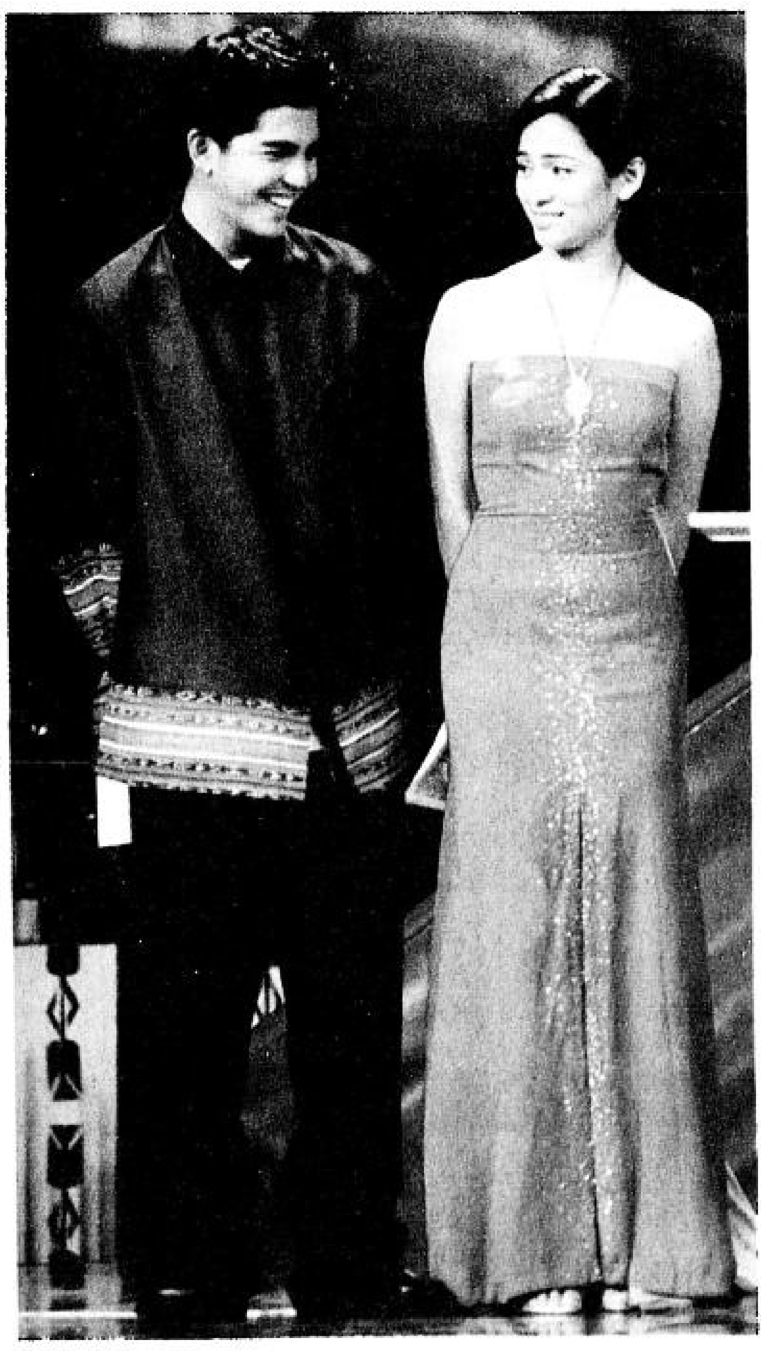


GISELLE Toengi looks dumpy in swirls of white.



CURLY-HAIRED Rica Peralejo's confused statement

The Metro film fest fashion carnival



MARK Herras could use a better pair of pants, while Jennylyn Mercado needs to try more exciting stuff.

From page 1

lot—less tulle and more soft fabrics to make a point.

If Sunshine wore too much fabric, bold stars Asia Agcaoili and Rica Peralejo were caught in the opposite bind. Asia obviously couldn't make up her mind as to which part of her body should be revealed, so she and designer Arielle Agasang decided to show it all—chest, tummy, legs—in a mindlessly revealing number rendered in blah silver.

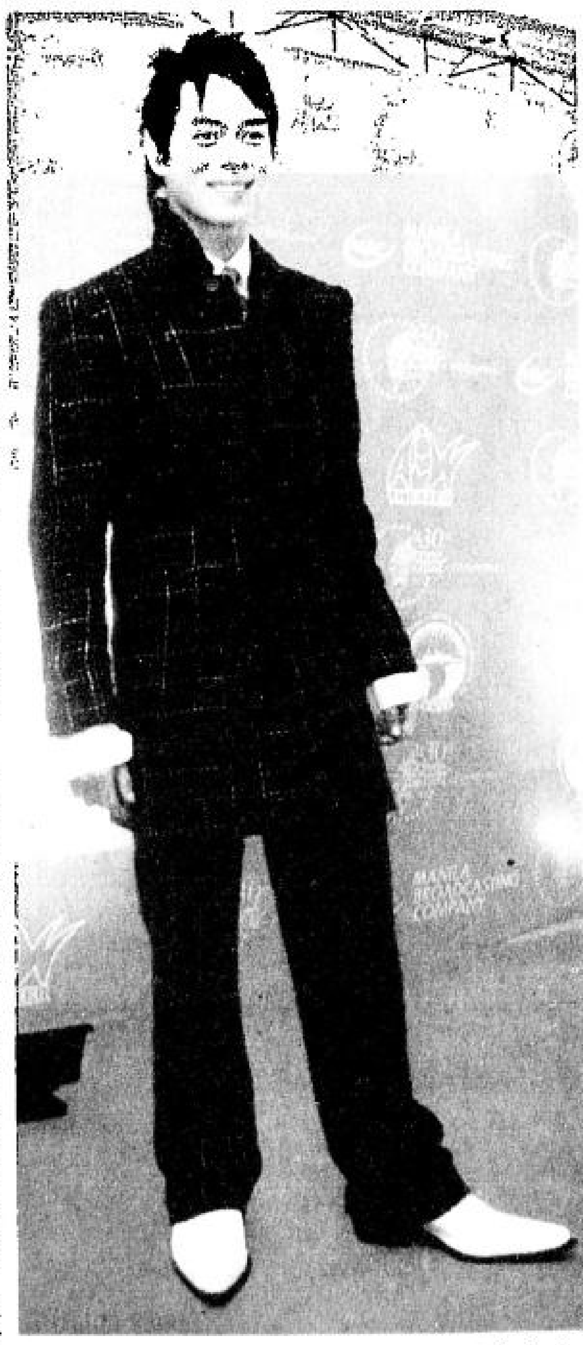
Rica was the fashion equivalent of schizophrenia in something that was neither a gown nor a dress. Worse, like her curly tresses, the gown exhibited a mind of its own as it peeked and puckered every which way.

Juliana Palermo wore a Larry Espinosa number that wasn't exactly one of our favorites among the designer's works. He capitalized on the bold star's height and ample assets with a draped and semi-beaded creation that was busier than usual.

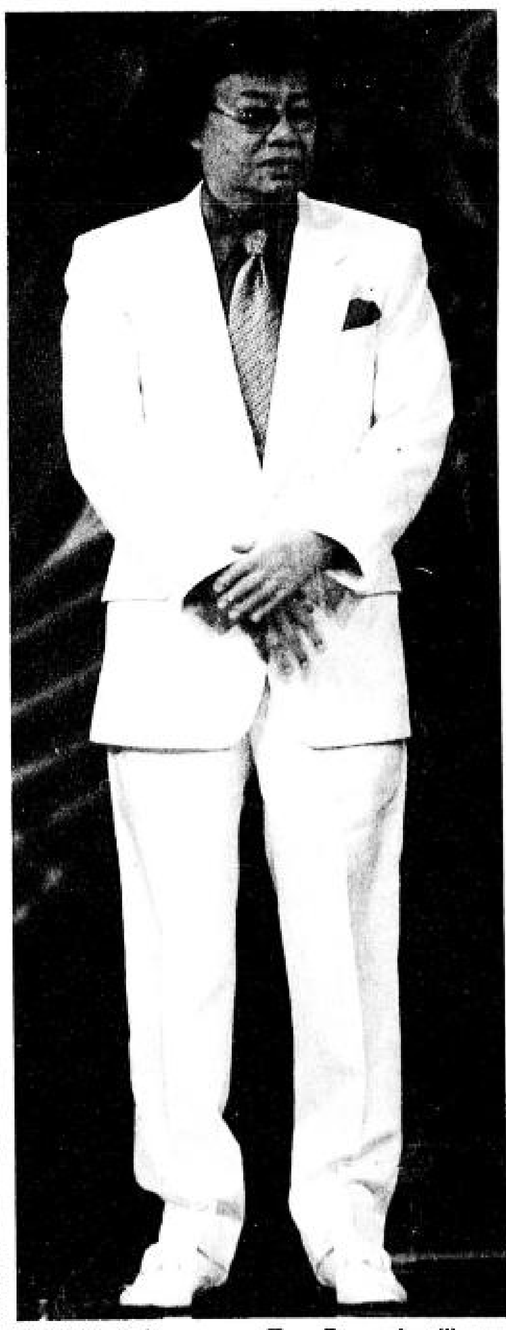
In contrast, Sarah Geronimo and Izza Calzado wore gowns that perfectly matched their celebrity personas, ages and figures. It was delightful to see a poncho-less Izza looking lovely in Pepsi Herrera's black silk gown with a sweetheart neckline and pair of giant bows on the shoulders that obscured her problem upper arms.

Sarah looked young but far from boring or syrupy in a strapless white chiffon column by Rhett Eala. The beaded silhouette of what seemed like a giant kris (although Eala says it's a cross) and ethnic strips on the neckline added to the outfit's native feel and stage dazzle during the singer's extended song number with Mark and Christian Bautista.

And unlike Sunshine, young Sarah was confident enough to stand by her chosen look, wearing the same gown throughout the entire program.



TWEEDY Jay Cuenca is too short to pull off the look, and those white shoes have an "X-44" look to them.



AFTER all these years, Tony Ferrer is still very much in character as Tony Falcon, a.k.a. "Agent X-44."

Are you ready for the third 'Pink Festival'?

THE "PINK FESTIVAL," a non-competitive film and video festival organized and run by the non-profit groups ProGay and Mowelfund Film Institute, holds its third season in June through July in Metro Manila, Cebu, Iloilo and Cagayan de Oro.

Last year, an estimated 17,000 ticket holders flocked to cinemas in three cities and one university.

With "In the Pink of Health" as theme, this year's festival seeks short films, documentaries and full feature films from all over the world. The participating movies must focus, highlight or give prominence to LGBT (lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals) issues and storylines.

The organizers are encouraging educational entries that tackle issues on reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, adolescent sexuality, and sexually transmitted infections.

All non-English-language entries should have subtitles in English or Filipino.

Submission deadline is March 15, 2005.

No application fee

There is no application fee, but all submissions should be accompanied by an official entry form.

Inquiries regarding the forms—and other details—can be emailed to: pinkfilmfest@yahoo.com.

Preview materials should be in NTSC Video CD, DVD and DV tape formats.

These preview disks or tapes should be clearly labeled with the name of film, filmmakers' names, year of completion and running time, both in English and the native language of the film's co-producers.

Sanskrit, Cyrillic?

Chinese, Cyrillic, Sanskrit and other non-Romanized language script should also have a coherent Romanized transliteration of the words, as they are pronounced in the original language/s.

Filmmakers should submit a brief synopsis of the film in English.

Hopeful participants are discouraged from sending original prints for preview. Because of the expense entailed in transporting big rolls of celluloid, the festival committee will require final prints of accepted entries in DVD form or some other suitable small format.

Filmmakers can email accompanying materials before sending the application in hard copy, so the committee can first check for missing data.